

What a wonderful world

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With America divided right down the middle on political matters and a president on the verge of a Senate trial to determine if he should remain in office, is it possible we are not living in the worst of times, but in the best? It is.

Politicians from both sides of the aisle benefit from telling us how bad we have it and, if only they are elected or re-elected, our world will somehow miraculously improve. Do we have it bad? Are we cruising toward Armageddon? No.

John Norberg is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. In a recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* (*The 2010s Have Been Amazing*, 12/17/2019) he writes: “The 2010s have been the best decade ever. The evidence is overwhelming...health, wealth and the environment are all better than ever...The gap in basic living standards is narrowing.”

Our world’s population is escaping poverty, hunger and disease. In just 10 years the poverty rate has fallen from 18.3 percent to 8.6 percent. This is a remarkable statistic.

Dramatic improvements in health have been advanced in the past decade, especially for children under the age of 5. Life expectancies have advanced more than three years in just the past ten years, another amazing accomplishment.

We are damaging our environment less now than ever in modern times as developed countries use less, not more, fossil fuels as well as aluminum, nickel, copper, steel, stone, cement, sand, wood, paper, fertilizer, water and crop acreage, according to Norberg.

I have often argued with environmental doomsayers that the solution to pollution is not a return to a 1990s era economy as is required in edicts like the Kyoto Protocol, which was rejected by the U.S. Senate 95–0, or the more recent Paris Climate Accord which would strengthen environmental bureaucrats in Europe, but do nothing to fight pollution. The solution to pollution is better found in advancing technology, not these flawed intergovernmental agreements which would impede innovation.

Our world and country are not without problems, of course. Across the planet there are mass demonstrations against governments. In Chile, France, Venezuela, Hong Kong, India and too many countries to name, tens of thousands of people have lined the streets to stand in solidarity against governments or government edicts with which they disagree. These are clear statements that humans chose freedom, not autocracy.

In America we may disagree on leaders and policies, but we are free to vote our preferences and it is ultimately the voice of the people that determines the directions we take.

I prefer to see life in the 1967 words of Bob Thiele and George David Weiss as sung by the great Louis Armstrong, *What a Wonderful World*... “I see trees of green, red roses, too; I see them

bloom for me and you; And I think to myself, what a wonderful world. I see skies of blue and clouds of white; The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night; And I think to myself what a wonderful world. The colors of the rainbow so pretty in the sky; Are also on the faces of people going by. I see friends shaking hands saying how do you do; They're really saying I love you. I hear babies crying, I watch them grow; They'll learn much more than I'll never know; And I think to myself what a wonderful world. Yes, I think to myself, what a wonderful world."

If you have access to a computer, just type these words in your search engine: Louis Armstrong sings 'What a Wonderful World'. You'll find many editions of this touching song.

As it is nearly Christmas, we are attending holiday parties and gatherings. At a recent dinner in Milwaukee, Carla and I recently sat at a round table with the president of the company and another couple. Forty people, including mostly staff and a few spouses and guests, sat at round tables for dinner near us in a relatively small private room in a fine restaurant.

These are people who do important work every day. I like to tell them they are the company's assets and they are. Without them there is no company. It was satisfying to hear them bantering with one another, laughing and talking loudly. They are a team. They like each other. One person, the longest tenured employee, stood and said she was proud of the work they do and how they do it. The president, CFO and I passed out small Christmas bonuses. The food was good. The service was excellent.

Tired from traveling and bending the day beyond our normal bedtimes, Carla and I eventually excused ourselves, and rode the elevator to our room in a hotel that adjoined the restaurant. As I was soon fading into sleep, I thought, "I see friends shaking hands, saying how do you do. They're really saying I love you...And I think to myself, What a wonderful world."