5th November 2025

Reward

"Carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward, safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you."

Princess Diana, *in Ray Matlock Smythe's "One Card at a Time"*

Between 1901 and 2025, Nobel Prizes (and, in recent years, the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel) have been awarded 633 times to 1,026 people and organisations, conferred by the Nobel Foundation on those who have given "the greatest benefit to humankind". (See https://www.nobelprize.org)

Alfred Bernhard Nobel was a 19th century Swedish chemist, inventor, engineer and businessman. He's best known for inventing dynamite. (Why does Guy Fawkes night come to mind?) But more importantly, Alfred Nobel bequeathed his substantial fortune to establish the Nobel Prize.

No genuine person looks for a Nobel Prize. Take, for instance, the Nobel Peace laureate for 2025 – Maria Corina Machado from Venezuela. Here is someone the Nobel Foundation describes as "the leader of the democracy movement in Venezuela … a brave and committed champion of peace … a woman who keeps the flame of democracy burning amid a growing darkness … one of the most extraordinary examples of civilian courage in Latin America in recent times." Did Maria Corina Machado make her choice of "ballots over bullets" because she would win a prize? Did she stand for justice and peace in order to benefit from public praise? Did she *ask* to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize? The answers are "No!" "No!" and "No!" again. She worked tirelessly for democracy, freedom, peace, justice, because it was a right and necessary thing to do.

It's the same for Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Literature, Economics. Were any of the winners driven by a desire for personal recognition, to receive plaudits, to be puffed up and grandiose? Of course not. They made their breakthroughs, discovered exciting things, championed new ways, because it was good, and of "the greatest benefit to humankind".

You and I may never be in the running for a Nobel Prize, but we can be in the running for doing good, making a difference, benefitting the lives of others, as Princess Diana reminded us. An award for that? No need, only the hope that one day someone will do the same for us.

A prayer for today

Today I pray that I might be able to offer some random act of kindness – for no reward!

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