

July 23, 2017  
Weiss

David

### Perfect Day

There's a holdup in the Bronx, Brooklyn's broken out in fights, there's a traffic jam in Harlem that's backed up to Jackson Heights, there's a scout troop short a child, Khrushchev's due at Idlewild... Car 54 where are you?

I may use the same opening for my next sermon, entitled "Perfect Storm." A perfect storm or a perfect day. Or both. It's a bright day on which you have a clear sense of purpose and unbridled energy. It's a rainy day filled with confusion - jumbled indecipherable thoughts.

There's an undercurrent of music - your choice - much of it confined to - or how about trapped in - your head. Sometimes the soundtrack is a haunting melancholic minor-keyed truth - somber solitude - Irish ballads for instance - and suddenly you're grasping a pint of ale in a dark cozy pub. Sometimes an uncanny riotous alto saxophone fantasy portends a dizzy walk across the Brooklyn Bridge, bicycles buzz by you, surrounded by deafening traffic helicopters and subway trains, the FDR drive, ferries on the East River below, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island in the distance. And you whirl around - a little dance - only to be confronted by

those impervious Wall Street skyscrapers. *Phew!!!* Welcome to my perfect day.

A little bit earlier today I was jubilant as I solved a cryptogram, then a sudoku, in short order. Inexplicably and excitedly, my wife insisted I look at a webpage called “Cats in Hats.” You laugh. When I leave here, I’m going to get some cherry vanilla ice cream. Am I happy? What do *you* think? I’m *way* beyond happy. Plus it’s a Chesapeake-style seafood feast for dinner tonight! And here I am in this pulpit (who ever could’ve guessed) delivering a sermon at a Unitarian Universalist *Society* in Wilmington Delaware on a lazy air-conditioned Sunday in July.

Unencumbered. A ray of sunshine streams through the window, bounces off a bald head. Or not. You laugh. Time stops. And here I wiggle my eyebrows - just because it feels right. Welcome to my perfect day.

Look folks I’m neither a minister nor a rocket scientist. But I’m quite certain that under very very few circumstances is a necktie part of a perfect day. “Oh yeah well what about eyeglasses?” I might well inquire of myself. Today I simply offer you a glimpse into some of my scattered, sophomoric, somewhat-unexpurgated and mostly unresolved thoughts. Does a perfect day just happen, or do we produce it? And what are the components of a perfect day?

**1.Ambiguity.** It seems to me that ambiguity is a key element of humor - puns, irony, misunderstandings, mistaken identity. Example: Our plane was delayed for five hours; as we wandered through the foreign airport, we happened upon a coffee shop called “Perfect Day.”

In an episode of the Honeymooners, the bus driver Ralph Kramden celebrates when he’s told one of his passengers died and left him her Fortune. Ralph attends the reading of the woman’s will, armed with a briefcase in which to stuff the money, only to discover that he’s inherited the woman’s beloved parakeet, whose name is “Fortune”.

So... I don’t always *want* the answer to be clear. No good, no bad, no beautiful, no ugly, no little or big, no far or near. I am a devil’s advocate (sometimes pronounced *pain in the butt*) and I’m capable of seeing many things in a cloud formation or an abstract painting. “Remember,” the sign reads, “there are no wrong answers.”

**2.Dreams.** Dreaming that the Phillies win; they beat the Mets and they’re in first place. Dreaming I’m aboard the starship Enterprise. See you on the dark side of the moon. I pretend I’m a cello, swaying in a gentle breeze. Sheep are safely grazing. My wife hits the lottery for \$262 million. I’m wiggling my nose and a smoothie magically appears.

[pause] “Get me a peach passion smoothie NOW!” [pause] Sorry - it doesn’t always work.

Better yet - I’m having a conversation with my father. Telling him a few things I never got to tell him, showing him my paintings.

Or how about - I’m five minutes late for the bus, but it’s a miracle - the bus is six minutes late and I hop on. [sip smoothie, wiggle eyebrows] Time may stop metaphorically but can you *actually* go back in time? The *idea* that I can manage time *is* comforting, it somehow helps me avoid feeling so desperate. How do you slow time? Who knows?

But it does seem to happen frequently as a result of being a stranger in a strange land, when I’m seeing new things, exploring unknown territory, meeting new people; even a trip to an unfamiliar supermarket in which I’m forced to operate outside my comfort zone can make it seem like I’m cramming so much into a short period of time. I get home where nothing much has changed and I realize only a little time has passed.

**3.Observations.** I spot a blue heron looking at its reflection in a canal. A cell phone’s goofy ringtone. I inspect a shiny new penny. The sky. Thinking about the sky. What does it mean when we say, “The sky’s the

limit?” So... is there really such a thing as the sky? Isn't it curious that you can see more of the sky in the darkness?

It's midnight and I'm listening to a train whistle. A tear rolls down my cheek, inexplicably, inexorably. Not worrying about why I'm not asleep. And suddenly I wake up and it's 7am and Begonia is on my chest looking at me and she says “Meow.” You laugh.

**4.Memories.** I'm ten and I throw my baseball glove down the sewer (ask me later). I'm fourteen, running across the street where my friends are waiting for me, waiting to start a touch football game.

I'm 25 years old, at my job, surrounded by piles of secondhand books to be sorted and shelved.

The time we visited a cave and saw a 25,000 year old painting of two spotted horses. A hill of crosses. An impromptu ceremony in the desert involving eggs and bones. Perfect days.

With Kathi, hand-in-hand, walking on a deserted beach, two miles, three miles, dolphins playing offshore, pelicans cruising, screaming seagulls. Kathi finds a sand dollar. And a scotch bonnet. And three sea olives. And a helmet conch.

**Recent memories.** Like yesterday, instead of practicing this sermon, I was with our two-year old granddaughter, who climbed up a sliding board, then slid down, then climbed back up and slid down again. Then she hugged me. Then she signaled she wanted me to hold her. It was a perfect day. I was busy hugging my granddaughter and I stopped caring about answers.

**5. Being here.** In the groove, in the moment. So here I am, playing a role, snapping my fingers, making the crowd laugh, making my friends laugh. All I have to do is snap my fingers and say “sporkie menucci” and somebody laughs. Another time you might see me amidst the choir, singing Mozart’s Requiem, singing... singing loud... daydreaming... even when - especially when - the band I’m in starts playing different tunes. Tolerate me on my perfect day while I free associate and zone out and the best stuff might just happen unexpectedly; that’s my story; trust that I’ll be taking care to view the world as a crowded theatre.

It’s a perfect day although I have few answers to present.

**6. Pausing.** It’s okay to stop. Silence. Maybe even a big fat yawn. It’s okay to skirt success; resist the urge to complete a project or even to make so-called “progress.”

I wiggle my eyebrows and put on a hat. You laugh. Bingo. [sip smoothie]

## What makes me happy?

Am I *ever* happy? I mean - am I ever *happy*! It's funny the items that contribute to a perfect day. Pretzels. A laughing baby. Juicyfruit gum. A sitcom. Sunrise. Fitting everything into my backpack. Shredded wheat with raspberries, listening to a bird. Thinking. Especially when I think something I've never thought before, when I realize I'm searching for truth and meaning - a new connection, arrival at a strange exotic locale. Connect the dots or leave them unconnected. I imagine that something I do matters in the world. I can either plot a route or drift. Considering something beyond myself.

Earlier I asked if a perfect day just happens by chance, or if we can do something to produce it. Exactly how might I create my own happiness? Do I need to adjust my attitude? Must I focus? Must I display restraint and discipline despite the chaos I experience within? Beats me!

In what ways do the people around me have influence? Who makes the day perfect? Then who among you possesses the power to corrupt the day? Bank clerks? Telephone canvassers? Workmen? TV newspeople?

The President of the United States? My wife? Who can turn the world on with her smile? Who can take a nothing day, and suddenly make it seem worthwhile?

The multi-colored electronic message flashes, “Come to First Unitarian if you can’t help yourself.” Occasionally I do arrive here wondering - “Where did I go wrong in the past week? How might I improve?” And then I look to you to help me see where I strayed. Speaking with you may help me recognize - and conceal - my passive nature. Or motivate me to take action. But it’s infrequent that I arrive here seeking an answer to the question, “What can I do to make a difference and to help others?”

I understand I probably can’t be as effective alone as we can be as a cohesive group. I *know* that when we all unlock the gates that surround us and join together to change things, nothing will stop us. Yeh - yeh - yeh. On that fine day I’ll march and proclaim that *nothing* is funny about peace love and understanding. Or something like that. But not today.

Because I have a confession. I admit that I often arrive here unprepared - unconcerned about making myself a better person and the world a better place. Yes it’s true. Sometimes my attendance here is part of a routine wherein I seek rest and relaxation. Isn’t this place a waystation and a



sanctuary? Sometimes this is *the* place where I require little - or nothing - of myself. Doesn't sound so great - eh? Deep thought? If so, it's brilliantly disguised as avoidance and procrastination. Or perhaps special things are more prone to happen when you don't try so hard, when you recognize that there's lots to learn and no need to have an opinion - or, at least, express an opinion - about *everything*. For some of us, that's easier said than done.

Before it's too late, I'd better say a word about perfection. Of course there *is* no perfection. But then, there is also no imperfection. No... precision... necessary... today. My perfect day requires no perfection. Just waves and clouds and trees, a bunny rabbit and a pair of cardinals in the garden. Layers of sound. The smell of people crowded into a subway car at rush hour, a cold drink on a hot day, a hot drink on a cold day, the color orange, your laughter, fried onions, a flock of geese, the feeling I get when I look to the west, slowing down or taking a nap, trusting that all things will work... smoothly... together.... wiggling my eyebrows again. A veritable patchwork symphony.

So today's lineup features ambiguity, both purposeful and unintentional, dreams, memories, observations, lots of pausing, and being here. Today an elegant emptiness and "I don't know" and deep breaths and the

warmth of friends and joyful disorganization. For me, that's enough on this midsummer day.

*Perfect* day? Something to think about while you're drying the dishes.