Every Dog Has His Day

In our house, probably like most, we have an odd assortment of animals that make our house their house. Among them is our dog, Barney. Our family dog is a colossus of a dog (though it is obvious he has no concept of this). Barney is one of those silently patient, eagerly accommodating, Heinz 57 fellas who is good with doing ‘whatever’ as long as at the end of it there might be a good chin scratch or maybe a treat. So, imagine my shock when one day while speaking with a good friend about a yard sale she’d gone to, she replies that her dog is the smartest being in her household.

I asked her to elaborate, because of course, you can’t just say something like that and then not follow it up. Am I right?

“Well, I actually wrote down a top ten reasons list,” she replies.

“A what?”

“Yeah. The top 10 reasons why my dog is the smartest guy in the house.”

I settled in for a good listen as she continued.

“Like, number one, he doesn’t leave the seat up when he goes to the restroom.”

“Yeah, I could see that.”

“Yep. And his greatest joys come from the simplest things. Like a smile, the kids coming home from the bus, a good meal.”

“You know,” I offered, “I’ve never really thought about a dog like that.”

“Oh, you should,” she giggled. “It’s very enlightening and sobering all at the same time.”

“Enlighten some more, oh, wise one,” I said encouraging her.

“Dogs know the value of a good stretch.”

She had me there. It’s very true. In fact, as I was speaking to her, Barney had sauntered into the room, laid his curly blonde head on my knee and was falling asleep sitting up. As she continued her very fascinating list, I watched Barney and determined that our own dog probably had some small wisdom to share, if I just paid attention long enough to see it.

Thus began my mission; to find wisdom from Barney. It would be my existential exercise for the day.

Hours 1-3 were kind of a bust. He fell asleep by the back door. I mean, what is there to be gleaned from that? I went on to run some errands and returned an hour later, happily greeted by his furiously wagging tail (because, of course, I’d been gone, like, fifteen days in his mind). As I unloaded the few items I’d gotten from the grocery store, he ran in with his squeaky toy in his mouth. Barney’s squeaky toy makes an annoying sound, honestly, and I’m thinking that because of this he likes to squeak it all the louder. Which he does. A lot.

Wisdom? Hmmmm. Not seeing it.

Hours 5-8: drinking water, slopping it onto the floor, barking at the mailman while wagging one’s tail furiously to show no hard feelings, and last but not least, turning exactly 8 full circles in excitement because the kids are now off the bus and walking toward the house.

I gave up at this point, because, let’s be honest, I had other things to do besides watch the family dog all day long. I mean, I have a life. I do. I really do.

And then it hits me.

Barney is wise. And it is true, that in many ways, he is the most blessed individual in the family. I had almost missed it. Barney lives in the moment. When he’s happy…he’s extremely happy. In fact, he’s right there, not worrying about consequences, or bills, or grades. He just IS. When he sleeps, he sleeps soundly and deeply, not a care in the world. The day will take care of itself, he seems to be saying.

His joys know no bounds; his sadnesses plumb the depths….and the sorrow? Usually comes as a result of having disappointed someone else. I honestly can’t say that about too many people these days. Maybe my friend was right. We get so busy doing so many things that we forget that we aren’t really designed to be human ‘doings’…..we are human ‘beings’….and it took a scruffy looking, drooly, monster of a dog to remind me of that.

I think he deserves a treat. Don’t you? After all, as metaphysical gurus go, he’s a dog.