

Widely Scattered Mainly Afternoon Thunderstorms

By John Roy

I may be the only one but the way the evening weather is done strikes me as odd. When I watch the weather the question on my mind is “what”? What should I wear? Do I need a coat, shorts, or an umbrella? However, the weather person presents the weather as if the question we are asking is, “why”? Why is it going to rain in the morning? What is happening in the upper atmosphere to cause rain? I imagine they concern themselves with the why because they have a better chance of telling us “why” than telling us “what”?

One of the cushiest weather reporting jobs has to be the person on the Gulf Coast. For any of us who grew up spending summers on the Gulf, could be a Gulf Coast weather personality. You don't have to go to meteorologist school to predict Gulf Coast weather. We've all heard it before. From early May to September the forecast is the same every day, “Today we are expecting widely scattered, mainly afternoon thunderstorms.” Every day the forecast is the same. At sometime in the afternoon, at some place along

the coast, there is going to be a thunderstorm. The storms won't last long, and we can't predict where they will land or even if they will land, but there is the possibility. "Widely scattered" is an excellent way of describing the weather. I mean you have complete immunity. If it rains three minutes in Pensacola, you were correct. Or if it rains twenty minutes at Fort Morgan, you were right.

Years ago on our beach vacation, we were making plans to go to a water park when we noticed a dark, ominous cloud hovering over the coast. This was the elusive "mainly afternoon widely scattered thunderstorm." Jo Ann recommended we stay at home and watch movies. I, of course, could not see wasting a perfectly good day watching movies when we could be playing in the water unless of course there was a Lethal Weapon marathon on TBS. Jo Ann again pointed out the cloud and warned we could not get our money back once we were inside the water park. In spite of her warnings I pushed on, "It's going to pass over, don't worry."

As we entered the park, a strong breeze took the hat off my head. The clouds were rumbling. Undeterred we began our day of waiting in twenty-

minute lines for forty-five seconds of fun. Jo Ann kept looking at me then looking at the cloud and laughing like Deborah on Everybody Loves Raymond. I told her not to worry; the rain would pass. A couple of hours pass and finally, it began to drizzle. Of course, we are already wet so who cares about a little rain when we are already soaked to the bone. As best as I could tell we were only in trouble if there was lightning.

Jo Ann decides to read her book under the canopy while the rest of us continue to float down the lazy river. She warns us to get out if we see lightning, who does she think I am. After fifteen minutes the rain lets up, and we were never asked to exit the water. Of course, the clouds never left, they hung around all day. I imagine this explains the shorter lines; people were scared off by the threat of “widely scattered mainly afternoon thunderstorms.” For once in my married life, I am vindicated as correct and wise as opposed to shallow and foolish.

Life is much like a trip to the beach. Each year, month, week, and day are filled with “widely scattered mainly afternoon thunderstorms.” There is always more than a chance of rain. The threatening skies keep some people

away from the things they would love to do. The fear of paying our money at the water park and then sitting out because of bad weather keeps some of us in our condos watching movies. Life is filled with “widely scattered mainly afternoon thunderstorms.” How will we deal with threatening weather? When the skies get dark will we get paralyzed or will we get our sunscreen?

Keep in mind though it might not even rain on us. Yet even if it does rain on us, it's not likely to last long, even if it should last longer than we'd like it's not expected to be so bad to make us exit the water because of lightning. Even if we did need to exit the water and a book on a bench or visit with family, this isn't the end of the world. In time we can go back into the water. In fact, the only way we can is to let the threat of a “widely scattered mainly afternoon thunderstorm” keep us away from doing what we want to do.

Moses instructed the spies to report back on the agriculture and lay of the land. The spies saw fortified cities and resident giants, which frightened them and led them to believe that the Israelites would not be able to conquer the land as God had promised. They saw the dark clouds and

assumed it was going to rain. Ten of the spies decided to bring back an unbalanced report, emphasizing the difficulty of the task before them. They knew it was going to rain—the wildly scattered shower had their name on it.

They gave Moses this account, "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are very powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there."

— Numbers, 13:27-28

There was a minority report---Two of the spies — Joshua and Caleb — did not go along with the majority and tried to convince the Israelites that they could conquer the land:

Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

— Numbers, 13:30

The majority ruled, but it does mean they did what was right. The ten allowed a dark cloud, and the chances of rain cause them to wander in the wilderness for a while longer.

My prediction for our lives is, “widely scattered mainly afternoon thunderstorm.” There are going to be some horrible days. These days, however, will be few. What we will have more of, will be days where instead of sunny and bright skies, it will be dark and cloudy. It is what we do with these days that measure our lives and our faith. Do we sit by with fear and worry, afraid it may rain or do we pick up our umbrella and go boldly out into the future knowing the chances of rain are slim and even if it does rain it won’t last long.