

Give thanks to the God of heaven, for His steadfast love endures forever.

Psalm 136:26

In September of 2018 the Lord saw fit to place a gift of life into my hands and it was a marvelous thing. A baby squirrel had fallen 30 feet from the safety of its mother's nest. There on the ground, the squirrel waited and called out for its mother, who for whatever reason never answered its cries. When the dehydration began to set in and the mother no longer sat and watched from above, we took the squirrel inside. That was when I began my journey with "Marvel"; and oh, what a journey it has been.



Almost immediately, I was connected to this little guy – within days we discovered it was a girl. There was absolutely nothing she could do for herself. I fed her, cleaned her, comforted her, and began to train her. She had to be taught to drink, eat, and eventually to hide things. She had to be taught to be aware of danger from humans and animals, and to jump, leap, and to hold on when the branches swayed. And there was the endless cleaning of her living space.

When the last frost passed, we moved Marvel outdoors and transitioned her to a sweet squirrel mansion that John built. It wasn't long until she moved to the hollow tree in the corner of the yard and continued her journey in the real world. She would still visit daily to be petted and fed on a few pecans and so forth. She began burying more than she ate and we knew the transformation back to the wild was working. Soon her visits were less frequent and she didn't want to be handled as much. But she would still perch on a shoulder and eat out of our hands. She weathered the tornado that did damage to our trees and shed. She made it through lightning storms and the like.



And every time she visited with me, she brought me such delight. When I would pull up in the drive I would look up in the tree and call out her name. Sometimes she would emerge from within the hollowed trunk, but most times I was just left marveling at the wonder of her.



Then last week, I was alerted to her presence in the yard. My granddaughter, Caitlyn, spotted her moving toward the house in short spurts. In between her movement she would fall still on the ground. I ran out to her where she laid just a few feet from the porch. She was trying to get home to safety. I dropped to my knees beside her and knew instantly how desperate the situation was because of the pleading look in her eyes. I placed my hands on her soft coat and whispered "Oh Marvel". She calmed while I became more anxious. She lifted her head toward me and I scooped her into my arms in time to be witness to her last breathes.

Nella, my 2-year-old granddaughter was the first to break the silence, "Grandma, you have water on your cheeks." "I know, sweet girl, those are tears, and it's okay for grandma to cry." Then it was Caden's turn (4-year-old grandson). "Grandma, you will be okay." To which I replied, "I know, baby, I will be fine." Then in perfect faith he said, "Grandma, we could pray to God and He would raise Marvel from the dead." And I agreed, God is able. After a thoughtful pause, while still holding Marvel, I said, "Caden, it is okay for Marvel to die. God is taking care of her now."

Now, some of you might be saying – it was a squirrel! Why all this fuss? And I have to admit I asked that question myself. After all, I am not much of a crier. In fact, other than some glistening eyes and recognition of the loss, there wasn't much else to it when, not too long ago, we lost our dog of 18+ years. So, I asked God, "What is going on? Why am I so distraught over this wild creature that couldn't do much of anything for me? I mean I spent an enormous amount of energy and time providing for Marvel, yet she couldn't do much for me, except just be. So why, God, is my heart so sad, and filled with so much love for this creature?" And then, just as the words came out of my mouth, it hit me. Isn't it just like God and me? I cannot do anything for Him, except just be and yet He loves me – radically loves me. The aha moment was marked with a verbal declaration. "I get it, God. You have just given me a glimpse of how much you love me." Gratitude filled my soul for the marvelous way God loves me, and for the lesson God taught me through a once in a life time relationship with one of His wild and wonderful creations.

And when I looked back at the place Marvel died, I realized it was almost exactly the place where John found her nearly one year ago. It truly was a full circle of life.

*Pastor Polly*

