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Ransom Notes

A Turtle and A Mouse

Relaxing one spring morning, following nine holes of golf, my eyes blinked twice. What was the tiny spot on the near-by chair? Refocusing, the brain clicked in. The dark, moving object was a wee turtle about half the size of a golf ball.



Movement was almost non-existent, but slowly, slowly, oh so slowly, the tiny legs methodically plodded ahead. Its destination was unknown to me, but I'm certain it was on course. Perhaps our mini-creature was hunting a bite to eat, a place to nap, or find its mother.

Google research suggested this size turtle could be less than a year old. Imagine being on your own, a mere infant, all alone, attempting to cross an area like a "white plastic desert," which we mortals call a deck chair. Probably a large human placed him on there originally. I'd be terrified, confused, and wondering, "Where are my parents?" Regardless, we spent several moments watching and enjoying the focus and tenacity displayed by one of God's creatures.

Competing for smallest creature is the Pacific pocket mouse. They weigh about as much as three pennies, and received their name from fur-lined, external cheek pouches used to carry food and nesting materials. One of these scurrying creatures, Pat, received the Guinness World Record title for longevity for being the oldest, living mouse in human care at the ripe age of nine years and two hundred nine days. Pat lived at the San Diego Zoo, so I'm certain many people have enjoyed watching him perform.

Why, you ask, would we take time to write about this pair of tiny, four-legged creatures? After all they are so small the average person would rarely even notice them. Give me a Galapagos tortoise, weighing in at about 500 pounds or even a hippo. The bigger the better, perhaps, we think. Certainly we grab our cameras more swiftly when viewing a herd of elephants around a muddy watering hole or a lion carrying her cub in her mouth, than a furry mouse.

"Big" is good. "Big" seems most important. We select the largest watermelon in the pile. Ears enjoy the music star with the longest list of hit songs. Boards hire a chief executive with the best profit ratio from her previous jobs. We select a guard for the school safety position who looks like a member of the front line of a professional football squad.

Or, is the biggest, brightest, most talented or well known just what we always need? In football, the tackle weighing in at 340 pounds was valuable, but the MVP award at the 2023 Super Bowl went to a light-weight, 210 pound quarterback. Hum, maybe "big" isn't always the criteria for getting the job done.

Our phone captured the image of the tiny turtle. He is now the subject of this article. He brought a smile on our face as we watched the wee body creep forward. We know not his goal, but he was persistent, in spite of his small frame.

Pacific pocket mice are useful in dispersing the seeds of native plants, as their tiny feet dig for food. Humans benefit from their God-given digging skills. "Small" can be useful. Many other wild life, and even humans, survive because of the new plant growth resulting from the spreading of these seeds. "Small" or "Insignificant" can also be productive.

Translate this message to humans. God created, and the little creatures diligently carried out the tasks given them. *"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong"* (1 Corinthians 1:27). A friend modeled an example of the small, quiet actions with which people can demonstrate God's love. On an extremely cold, January day, she spotted a single mom and her son walking. Pulling over, she invited them to hop in the heated car and quickly took them home. No fanfare, no public announcements, just a simple act of caring about others.

Remember in John 6:1-15, the young kid who went to hear the Master speak near the Sea of Galilee? Knowing growing boys, he had a bag of food with him. Not much, just five small barley loaves and two tiny, dried fish, but what a surprise! Jesus gave thanks, and the little snack sack fed five thousand men with twelve baskets remaining to feed others.

Our mouse digs in the dirt for food, and as a result creates food for others. Matthew 13:32 reminds us the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, yet when full grown, is larger than other garden plants. Single acts of kindness can warm the hearts of recipients. Two simple phone calls to a shut-in recently. Tiny turtle - golf ball brought her joy and comfort. A small zip-lock bag of fruit and snacks fed a hungry guy one Sunday morning at church.

God can take the humble and create riches.

Can this simple story accomplish bold outcome? It's up to you, dear reader.

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

