

Story: Two Wings and a Prayer

August 7, 2022

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Luke 12:32-40

The oma'o is a fairly small bird, living on the lower slopes of the volcanoes from Hamakua to Ka'u. When you're an oma'o chick, you're even smaller. He hatched and grew up in a hole in a koa tree, and about the only thing he could even imagine as he looked out from the hole was:

It's a great big world, and I'm a very small bird.

He was, of course, a very small bird, but he grew to become, well, a larger but still very small bird. The world outside was still a lot bigger than he was. He watched his parents fly back and forth to and from the nest, and wondered how they did it. Their wings seemed awfully small to carry even their small bodies. Their feet seemed awfully fragile to grip a twig. How was someone like him to have any place in a huge world like this?

Young oma'o do some experiments that lead to flying. They move their wings around and start to preen them, to settle their feathers with their beaks. They start to hop and stretch their legs in the nest – but they don't leave the nest. In fact, after they leave the nest, they don't come back to it. They'll stay where their parents can find them – they still feed them for a while – but they don't go back to the nest.

This young oma'o, however, wasn't sure he wanted to leave the nest. Big world. Small bird. Small wings, big air. It was a night that the winds blew hard that he came to a decision.

"No," he told his father. "I'm staying here."

"Very smart, son," said his father. "It's a nasty night. The nest is a good place for now, and it's not a great time to take your first flight."

"No," said the youngster. "I mean I'm just staying here. I'm not going to leave."

The father didn't know what to say, so he didn't say anything. Nor did mother when the youngster told her in the morning.

"What are you going to do just staying in the nest?" asked mother.

"What I'm doing now," he said.

“Wouldn’t you like to fly?” asked father.

“I don’t think so,” said the child.

It was mother who settled down with him and got him to say what was going on. The world was too big. The winds were too strong. His wings were too fragile. He was too small.

Then he asked, “How do you do it, Mom?”

She thought about it. “It is a big world,” she said. “I’m a small bird. My little wings aren’t much to carry me through strong winds. But I’ve got a couple of things that carry me through it all.”

“What?”

“Well, I haven’t got one just wing. I’ve got two. With only one, I don’t think I’d get far. With two, I can get anywhere I want.”

“But how did you make that first leap of faith?” he asked.

“I just flapped my wings and hopped, and as I hopped I hoped and prayed. Suddenly my wings caught the air and I was flying.”

Without even realizing it, the young fledgling was hopping and flapping. “So a wing and a prayer?” he asked.

“Two wings and a prayer,” said his mother, “and I took my first flight – just like you’re doing now.”

Sure enough, his flapping wings had caught the air and he’d taken off on his first short flight.

“Just like that,” he marveled, “on two wings and a prayer.”

by Eric Anderson