

Story: World of Weeping

September 18, 2022

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

Psalms 79:1-9

Up on Kilauea, where people look out over the great crater/caldera at the summit, a little girl was crying as if her heart would break. Why? Well, it probably had something to do with a trip and a fall and some bruised knees, and maybe because a favorite stuffed animal was all dusty. There were tears running through the dirt on her face.

This story is not about her, however, even if it starts with her. It is about a young koa'e kea, a white-tailed tropicbird, that was resting on a small ledge in the cliff just below the little girl and her family. She'd never heard such a sound before. She leapt into the air and circled about, watching the little human and her family as they comforted her, brushed the dirt from the stuffed animal, and headed away.

The young koa'e kea found her father had joined her circling. "What was that all about?" she asked.

"That was crying," he said. "Creatures cry when they're unhappy or in distress."

"What a horrible noise," she said, "and those drops of water from the eyes!"

Her father watched the human father who was carrying the little girl in his arms by this point and said, "It seems to work. A lot of creatures have their own version of tears."

"I'll never do anything of the kind," announced the koa'e kea daughter firmly.

"Never?" asked the father.

"Never," said the daughter.

"Hm," said the father. "Fly with me for a little bit."

The first thing they saw in their loops about the island was a mother pig and some piglets. One of the little ones had wandered into a thicket and got turned around, and he was squalling for his family. The sow heard him, found him, and herded him off to join the rest of the family.

The next thing they saw was an old ohī'a tree creaking in the wind. You and I wouldn't say it was crying, exactly, but there was a light dust floating away on the breeze as the tree swayed. "Is it sad?" asked the young koa'e kea.

"Just a little," said her father. "It's struggling to keep growing where it is, but it has special tears. They're seeds, and even if this tree can't grow, perhaps some of its seeds can."

They flew about the cliffsides until they heard another sound. It was a koa'e kea nest, and the chick in it had spotted one of his parents. It cried its hunger until the mother satisfied it.

"Did I do that?" asked the young koa'e kea circling nearby.

"You did," confirmed her father.

Last of all, they swooped and soared over the Halema'uma'u crater, watching the red lava, which was streaming from a vent in the crater side into the lava lake below.

"Is the mountain crying?" asked the young bird.

"You can say so," said her father. "When the mountain cries, the island rises."

"So all things weep," said the koa'e kea.

"Maybe not all," said her father, "but when they do, it's usually for a reason. It helps them get through the time."

"I guess if the rest of the world can do it," she said, "maybe I can, too. If I need to."

"If you need to," said her father, and they flew off to the ocean for dinner.

by Eric Anderson