

Story: The Hardest Thing

September 25, 2022

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15

Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16

They were an unusual collection of friends. They literally came from different parts of the world: from land, from sea, and from air, a mongoose, a honu, and a kolea. I don't know how it first happened, but they'd developed the habit of taking a spot on a beach, with the honu pulled up in the sun, and the kolea looking for tidbits, and the mongoose taking a brief rest while the three talked story.

Today they were deciding what was the hardest thing.

"Rocks are the hardest thing," shuddered the mongoose. "They hurt my paws sometimes, and a couple times when I wasn't careful I knocked my head on one. Rocks are definitely the hardest thing."

"Rocks are pretty hard," agreed the honu, "but they also make nice shelter when the waves are high. You just nestle in behind them."

"I fell into water once," said the kolea. "I have to say it was pretty hard."

"That's right," said the honu. "Water is the hardest thing. When the waves are crashing over me or the undercurrent is pulling me away from the beach, I'm grateful for the rocks. They don't do that."

"You haven't tried the air," said the kolea. "That's a hard thing for sure. This last flight here to Hawai'i Island, I wasn't sure I'd make it. We flew into winds that just blew us back and back and back. I can't imagine anything harder than that."

The three of them thought about this for a good long time, tossing in more examples of how rocks and water and air were hard things, when the honu said, "I'm hungry." His two friends agreed.

They were about to split up to find dinner, when the mongoose said, "Wait just a moment. Wait just a moment and let's think about this moment.

"Do either of you know that you'll find food? I mean, absolutely know?"

The honu and the kolea admitted that they didn't, although the kolea took a quick look around for a handy bug before saying so.

"In this moment, we're all hungry, we all need food, right? And none of us are certain that we'll find it."

"Yes," said the honu, "but we hope we'll find it."

"Right," said the kolea, "we hope we'll find it."

"But isn't this the hardest thing?" asked the mongoose. "We know what we need now and we don't know if we can find it – not for certain. We hope we will... but doesn't that make hope the hardest thing?"

That's how a mongoose, a kolea, and a honu discovered that hope – that time we spend between realizing what we need and finding what we need – is, indeed, the hardest thing. Hope carries us from one to the other, but it may not be an easy journey, and it's harder than high winds or strong waves or a solid rock.

by Eric Anderson