

# Story: The 'Amakihi's New Feathers

March 5, 2023

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

John 3:1-17

The 'amakihi was concerned. He was about 15 months old, feeling something like an adult – I know that's young for a human being but he was an 'amakihi, and they grow faster. Come to think of it, they haven't got quite as much growing to do. He could fly. He could find food. He could sing. All in all, he had a pretty good 'amakihi life.

He didn't want it to change.

His feathering was still that of a younger 'amakihi, which is basically a medium green with some hints of yellow. Some birds might think it dull – the bright red i'iwi might say so – but he rather liked it. It matched the leaves of an ohi'a tree rather nicely. Sometimes he thought of that as safety from circling i'os. Sometimes he thought of it as a fashion statement. Anyway, he liked his feathers, their color, and their shapes.

He didn't want it to change.

But... it was starting to change and he knew it.

Already he'd had a couple of his big wing feathers fall out and grow back, and more were coming. He'd been through feather molting before, and he knew what was coming. The wing feathers would go and grow, and then the smaller feathers on his head and chest. Even with the first wing feathers he could see the change in color. They were less green, more yellow, and he knew that when the new feathers came on his chest they'd be bright yellow in the sun.

And he didn't want it to change.

He couldn't think of a single thing to do about it, so he went to his grandmother. "Tutu," he said, "what do I do? My color is changing and I don't want it to!"

"What's wrong with it?" she asked.

"Nothing, but I like how I am now. I don't want to change."

"You don't want to change?" she asked, and when he said no, she took to her wings and called, "Follow me!"

The first thing they saw was a butterfly flitting through the air. When they landed, there was a caterpillar on the branch. "One of these," said Tutu, "made a big change to become one of those," and she pointed her beak at the butterfly. "Do you think it was worth it?"

"To fly? Yes, I do," said her grandson, and flew off after Tutu again.

They took a look at an 'amakihi nest, where two young birds had hatched, grown, and taken their first flights over the previous several weeks. They were about ready to leave for a life of their own. "Did you want to stay in the nest?" asked Tutu.

"Of course not," he said.

"But that was a change."

"I suppose it was," he said.

"Life is filled with change," said Tutu. "Some are big, like the caterpillar that becomes a butterfly, or the 'amakihi that leaves the nest. Some are smaller, like the bright yellow feathers that are coming to you. Perhaps you'll become a parent, and that's a big change, and perhaps there will be a lava flow in our forest, and that's a big change."

"So what do I do?" he asked.

"Make the best new you as you grow and change," said Tutu gently. "Find delight in new things where you can, and make delight when the new things come hard. You'll always be a new you. Be a loving and caring new you."

*by Eric Anderson*

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