

Story: Your Fault!

March 19, 2023

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

The two i'iwi – I don't know whether they were husband and wife or brother and sister or cousins or friends, but there was he and there was she – were very excited. Setting out early in the morning, they had found an ohī'a tree that had gone into full blossom overnight. From its lowest branches to the tip of its crown, it glowed bright red in the dawn. The scent of nectar – which I can't smell, can you? But they could – wafted out among the other trees, some of which had a few blossoms, but nothing compared to this marvel.

They settled in to feed.

"Let's keep this for ourselves," said he to she.

"We'll keep this for ourselves," said she to he.

Shortly after they arrived, along came an 'amakihī eager for breakfast. The two i'iwi promptly drove him away, determined to keep all the nectar for themselves. Another i'iwi appeared and they chased him off, too. As the sun slowly rose into the sky, the two birds kept others away as they appeared, sipping nectar in between to keep their strength up.

About mid-morning an 'apapane sniffed out the nectar and the blossoms and the tree and flew straight into the walloping wingbeats of the i'iwi. "Go away and never come back!" shrieked the "he" i'iwi. "And don't tell anyone else about this tree!" screamed the "she" i'iwi.

"Uh, oh," said he to she.

"What?" said she to he, though she knew.

"That's an 'apapane. They'll tell anybody," said he to she.

"They'll tell everybody," said she to he.

Sure enough, the birds began to arrive in larger numbers. Before it had been just one at a time. Now they came in pairs, in double pairs, in sixes and sevens and eights. The two i'iwi zoomed around the tree, using their bright red feathering and bright red voices to startle other birds away. As she chased some 'amakihī away, he noticed an 'apapane – it as the same one who'd

spread the word earlier – swoop in, settle on a cluster of blossoms, and get a good sip of nectar before he took off again, with the he i'iwi in pursuit.

“That was your fault!” said he to she.

“That was your side of the tree!” said she to he.

The birds kept coming – i'iwi, 'apapane, 'amakihi, mejiro, and I do know who all. They kept coming and no two birds in the entire world could have kept them all away. Still, the forest rang with the angry shouts of the two i'iwi.

“That was your fault!” said he to she.

“That was your fault!” said she to he.

In fact, they'd lighted on an ohia branch to better carry on the argument rather than chase other birds away from the tree. They didn't even eat, despite the deep red blossoms glistening with nectar next to them.

“Ahem,” said a voice. They stopped their shrieks and turned to see that first 'apapane, the one who'd spread the word, perched nearby.

“Thank you,” he said. “It's been a delicious breakfast.”

With one motion, the two i'iwi pointed their beaks at the 'apapane and screamed, “This is your fault!”

“It might be, I suppose,” he mused, “but whose fault it is doesn't get you any breakfast.” And off he flew.

The two i'iwi, hungry, throat-sore, and tired from all the morning's chases, looked at one another, looked at the flowers, and had breakfast.

by Eric Anderson