

Story: Independent

March 24, 2024

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Mark 11:1-11

The 'amakihi aren't the most social birds in the world. They often forage by themselves, with their mate, or with a few family members. When the hatchlings have left the nest they sometimes join loose flocks of other 'amakihi, 'apapane, 'akepa, and so on. But not always.

One young 'amakihi took this a little further than most. He announced to his family and friends that he didn't need anybody.

If you looked at things a certain way, that seemed true. An 'amakihi doesn't need a lot of help to find food in the forest. They eat pretty much anything. They'll eat nectar. They'll eat fruit. They'll eat bugs. In fact, mostly bugs. If it's edible on the mountain, the chances are that an 'amakihi is eating it.

Although they will fly above the trees, the 'amakihi are very nimble fliers. They can stop dead in the air, which is quite a trick. They don't worry too much about the 'io or the pueo. If they're above the trees when they spot one, they can dip back into the trees pretty quickly and the 'io doesn't have the turning ability to keep up through the branches and trunks. It's a careless 'amakihi that becomes somebody else's meal.

So the other 'amakihi weren't entirely surprised when the young one announced, "I don't need anybody!"

"No help to find bugs?" asked one.

"No need!" he said.

"No help to find water?" asked another.

"No need!" he replied.

"No company?" asked his mother.

"No need!" he announced, but maybe a little too quickly and a little too loudly.

"All right," said his grandmother, and the little group of his family and friends flew away and left him there alone.

It was fine for a day. He ate well. He kept an eye out for 'io. He had good places to rest.

It was fine for a second day. He found an ohī'a grove nodding with blossoms.

It was starting to feel not so good on the third day. He hadn't made his way through all the ohī'a yet, but he felt heavy and kind of sad. The sweetest bugs didn't cheer him up.

On the fourth day he realized he was lonely.

He sat and sang a sad little song, one you don't often hear from an 'amakihi.

The branch he was sitting on bounced down and up, and he turned to see his mother perched there. She listened to him finish his sad little song. Then she waited.

"I think I need somebody sometimes," he said.

"I'm not surprised," she replied.

"Really?" he said.

"Everybody does. We don't live by bugs and nectar alone."

The two of them flew back to find the rest of the family and a less lonely future.

by Eric Anderson