

Story: Risky

March 31, 2024

Isaiah 25:6-9

John 20:1-18

You and I are familiar with mynas. They're all over the place, for one thing. And they have a habit of shrieking at us for no particular reason. Here at Church of the Holy Cross, we're also used to picking up after them because they try to build nests under the eaves and they're remarkably bad at doing it.

You and I aren't so familiar with the Manu-o-Ku, known in other parts of the world as the white tern. They tend to be a little bigger than a myna with longer wings. The myna has brown feathers with black feathers on the head and that distinctive yellow mask around the eyes leading to the bright yellow beak. The Manu-o-Ku is all white except for black eyes and a straight black beak. They don't live here on Hawai'i Island, but you'll find them – and mynas – living on O'ahu.

Two mynas were watching a manu-o-ku family prepare for laying an egg, and they were pretty critical about it. I may think mynas build messy nests, but the mynas were surprised that the manu-o-ku didn't build a nest at all. "Where is the egg going to go?" asked one. "They haven't done anything about a place to keep it from rolling away," said the other.

The manu-o-ku ignored all this – they heard it, of course, because mynas aren't usually quiet. They just flew from branch to branch, checking things out, and didn't fetch a single piece of grass to build a nest.

Finally they settled onto a spot where a branch forked. It made a little spot with a hollow, like the bowl of a spoon – a very shallow spoon. I don't think I'd have noticed it, but the manu-o-ku did. Somewhat later, the mynas returned to find that a single egg rested in that little depression, and that the father and mother manu-o-ku were taking turns keeping it warm.

"I'm shocked," said one of the mynas. "I am, too," said the other. "That egg is going to fall off." "And if the egg doesn't," said the first, "the chick will."

The manu-o-ku heard this and said nothing.

About a month later, the egg hatched, and the newborn chick's feet were able to easily hold onto the forked branch of its nest. The parents brought fish and squid from the ocean to feed it. "That will never work," said the mynas to one another. "That chick is doomed for sure."

But it wasn't. It took its first flight. It stayed nearby and the parents continued to bring it meals. It learned to catch its own food. It took to the skies.

"That shouldn't have worked," said the first myna. "It was an awful risk," said the second.

"It's a good thing that it worked, then, isn't it?" called one of the manu-o-ku, and flew away in a flurry of white feathers.

You know, Jesus took a risk when he taught people to love one another, because some people don't want to do that and they got angry about it. He took a risk when he loved people enough that he didn't act violently when they came to be violent to him. He took a risk by going to the cross, and that risk took him to the grave. If you want to make things better, those actions shouldn't work.

Jesus rose from the dead, and suddenly all those actions did work, all those risks of love and of peace and of death itself. It was more precarious than a manu-o-ku egg on a branch, but on that Easter Day love won, and it will always win.

By the way, we have taken a risk this morning. We've placed Easter eggs around the church and in a moment we're going to ask you to find them. The risk is that if you don't find all the real eggs, in a couple of days of sunshine they'll get really warm and smelly. So help us out here. Make something good happen for yourself and for all of us. Find those eggs. It will be an Easter risk that worked.

by Eric Anderson