

Story: Unbelief

March 31, 2024

Isaiah 25:6-9

John 20:1-18

In the gospel stories about Easter, there's a common theme. It's unbelief. People heard – from angels, initially – that Jesus had risen from the dead, and... they didn't believe them. Later people heard from other people that Jesus had risen from the dead, and they didn't believe the people. I guess that makes sense. If you don't believe angels, how likely are you to believe people?

Once there was an 'apapane who didn't believe in love.

If that seems hard to believe, well, it was hard to believe. He had been raised with two sisters by attentive parents who fed them well, kept them warm in the rain, and taught them all to sing. They flew with him, they brought him to good trees to find bugs and nectar, and they kept him company when the nights got long and lonely.

But he didn't believe in love.

You might be thinking that his sisters teased him all the time and that's why he didn't believe in love. It's true. They teased him. But not much, really. More to the point, the teasing didn't bother him. He teased them back and they all would laugh at the silly things they'd say.

Still, he didn't believe in love.

"You're just taking care of me because it keeps the family going," he told his parents, who really didn't know what to say about that.

"You're just good to me because you expect I'll be good to you," he told his sisters, and he was good to them, but as he said, it was because he expected them to be good to him.

I suppose it might have been because nearly the entire time since he'd cracked the shell that the skies had been gray, the winds had been cold, and the rain had plummeted down.

I sometimes find it hard to believe in love after too many days of cold, grey, windy rain.

He and his sisters had put in a hard day of nectar- and bug-seeking. There might have been oh! a flowers in blossom, but they were hard to see in the grey light. The bugs were hiding from

the rain, not even troubling to go find nectar to eat. The three siblings huddled for the night on a branch, cold, wet, and hungry.

He was grateful for their warmth but he still didn't believe in love.

When morning came, he blinked his eyes to an unfamiliar light. The clouds had cleared overnight, and the wind gently rustled the leaves. He and his sisters, all three, stared at the golden light of the sun rising over the trees. As it got higher, the ohī'a blossoms opened in scarlet and gold glory. As it got higher, its warmth dried their feathers.

"Wow," said the sisters. "What a difference that makes."

"More than you know," said their brother. "It's like a completely different world."

"Is this a world where you can believe in love?" asked one sister.

He thought about it for a while.

"You know, I think it might be," he said.

They helped one another get their drying feathers into shape – that's kind of an 'apapane hug – and flew off into the sunrise over the glorious bloom of ohī'a.

As they flew, they sang together. You know what they sang?

"I think I believe in love."

by Eric Anderson