

Story: Part of the Flock

June 9, 2024

Genesis 3:8-15

Mark 3:20-35

The three nene goslings had grown from the day they'd hatched. They'd joined their parents on walks around the nest area, which had grown longer as they'd grown stronger, to find the grasses and berries that made them a good breakfast. And lunch. And supper. And any-time-of-the-day snack.

Nene don't really have a lot of use for set times for their meals.

The three goslings had learned to fly once their feathers had grown in and their wing muscles had become strong enough. They'd flown with their mother, and they'd flown with their father, and they'd flown with them both, and a few times just the three of them alone. They'd had something of a scolding from their parents the first time, but not after that.

They thought they'd got themselves set up for living. They had family. They had food. They had flight. What more could you ask?

It turns out that there was something else. To family, food, and flight, they needed to add: flock.

"What's that?" asked one of the goslings, who hadn't heard the word before.

"It's more nene, dummy," said his slightly older sister, who had heard the word.

"Don't call your brother dummy," said their mother.

"Yeah, don't call him dummy, even when he is," said the youngest of the three, a little brother who had been practicing teasing his siblings and become good at it.

"Stop teasing," ordered their mother, "and listen."

"We're part of a larger flock," said father patiently. "We're a small family, and the other nene are the bigger family. They help us find food when it's scarce, and they help us keep i'o away, and, well, it's good to have them there."

"I don't need anybody else," said older brother. "Food, family, and flight. And even some of my family could be better behaved."

“Look, son,” said mother, “when I was young I didn’t think I needed a flock, either. But the world is bigger than what you’ve seen so far, even though you can fly. There’s an ocean and there are people and there are other creatures. In the flock we get some help when we’re confused. We learn things we wouldn’t otherwise know.”

“Fly with me,” said father, and the little family took off and soon landed amid a larger, but still rather small, group of nene. He introduced the three youngsters to the others.

“You need to become part of the flock,” said one of the new nene, who was actually a kupuna nene. “Fly with us.”

So they did. They took off together and did a series of circles around the place where they’d met. It wasn’t elegant – none of the young nene had been to Nene School yet, so their formation flying was pretty awful. Still, they did their best, and as they flew they realized that the air flowed over them differently when it was shaped by other birds’ wings. As they landed, they realized that the group had chosen a different place, one where the ‘ohelo was abundant.

“You are now part of the flock,” said the kupuna nene. “We are glad to have you fly with us.”

The next day, of course, they began Nene School, so they could eat better and fly better. And they were glad to fly with their new flock.

by Eric Anderson