

Story: Not Doing So Fine

June 30, 2024

Lamentations 3:22-33

Mark 5:21-43

He was the oldest pueo in the nest. He was the best. He did things right.

At least, that was his opinion.

It wasn't his younger sister's opinion, but that frequently happens with younger brothers or sisters. They tend to think an older (or a younger, come to think of it) sibling can't do anything right. Oldest children, however, or oldest fledglings in this case, tend to think, "I'm right. I've got this. Depend on me."

And before you ask, yes, I was the oldest child in my family.

To his sorrow, it turned out his mother didn't think he did everything right, either. She wasn't like his sister, who didn't think he did anything at all right. No, Mother was far more specific. She didn't like the way he flew, or hunted for food, or caught it. "You're beating your wings too fast," she'd tell him. "You're not paying enough attention while you're circling," she told him. And, of course, "You're coming down too fast."

The problem was that everything she told him happened to be correct. He was an overeager flier, and he tired himself out. In that fatigue haze, he didn't look carefully for mice on the ground, and he'd miss them. So far his dives to catch prey hadn't been complete disasters, but they weren't getting better, either.

"I'm doing fine," he hooted at his mother.

"No, you're not," she hooted back.

Exasperated, he flew off alone, without his mother or his sister, to avoid her steady barrage of corrections.

That worked. Well, it stopped the criticisms. At least the ones he could hear with his ears. His mother had succeeded, however, in creating some mother memory in his head, and he could still hear her telling him to fly slower, look more carefully, and for pity's sake, control your dives.

But he didn't change any of that. Which is why, after missing several swoops and getting hungrier and hungrier, he made a desperate dive for a mouse and crashed right into a bush. He crawled out, leaving behind several feathers in the process, and found his little sister waiting for him.

"Are you OK?" she asked, and she meant it.

"Mostly," he said, feeling rather bruised.

"You need to talk to Mom," she said. "Actually, you need to listen to Mom."

He knew he did, but he also knew how much he'd annoyed her. "I don't think she'd help me after all I've put her through," he said.

His sister shook her head. "She absolutely will," she fussed at him. "Go ask Mom for help. Say you're sorry. But ask her for help. She will."

They flew back together, and he did say he was sorry, and he did ask for help, and he finally started following her instructions, and he finally started to learn.

His sister couldn't resist telling him, "I told you so," but he was grateful to both of them anyway.

by Eric Anderson