

Story: Ours. Not Yours.

September 8, 2024

James 2:1-17

Mark 7:24-37

I don't know what I did to offend a couple of our local mynas, but I have clearly disturbed one or two them. They screech at me as I'm walking along outside the church buildings. Maybe I'm breathing too loudly for them?

Mynas are somewhat quarrelsome among themselves, and when nesting spots are scarce they'll chase anyone and everyone away, but they typically share feeding spots with anyone around. Kolea, saffron finches, house finches, doves, and others eat their seeds and bugs alongside flocks of mynas.

One mynas flock, however, chose a feeding spot to be their very own, and only theirs. They wouldn't accept other birds in it. They screeched at them, they advanced threateningly at them, and if they didn't take the hint they'd jab at them with their beaks.

"No finches allowed!" they'd screech, and then, "Get out of here, dove!"

"Kolea go home!" they said, which seems pretty unfair, and "No room for cardinals here!"

It was pretty ugly, and pretty selfish.

It was also remarkably foolish.

You see, having chosen their ground, they'd also chosen to protect it. There's a limit to how much ground a flock of mynas can protect, and in this case, it wasn't big enough for them. Ordinarily, when a patch of land gets picked over for seeds and bugs so there's not much left, they'd move on to another place. The old place would get some rest for new seeds to form and new bugs to move in. But they'd picked their ground, and they weren't moving, and the seeds began to get scarce and the bugs harder to find.

Even with the spot limited only to mynas, it wasn't quite enough.

If they hadn't driven other birds away, they might have noticed when other birds started looking somewhere else, and they might have followed them to a better spot. They didn't. If they hadn't driven other birds away, they might have moved about more freely themselves. They didn't. If they hadn't driven other birds away, they might have given their chosen piece of land some time to pause and replenish.

They didn't.

The flock began to dwindle. One day a myna flew away because she was hungry and there wasn't enough there. The next day two mynas flew away. The area they could protect got smaller, so even with fewer mynas there still wasn't quite enough food.

When the flock got down to two or three hungry birds, they looked at one another on the thin grass of their chosen ground, and said to a curious nearby kolea, "This is ours. Not yours."

"You can have it," said the kolea. "I'll be better elsewhere."

And you know what? The kolea was absolutely right. He did much better elsewhere than these stubborn mynas did in their chosen spot.

by Eric Anderson