

Story: Celebration Songs

September 15, 2024

Isaiah 50:4-9a

James 3:1-12

He was her brother. She was his sister. They'd been raised in the same 'apapane nest up in the ohī'a forest. They'd been fed by the same parents. They'd learned to fly together. They'd learned how to forage in the trees together. They both wore bright red feathers and black wings with white feathers underneath. They were...

Completely different from one another.

He was a complainer. No ohī'a blossom ever had enough nectar. No bug was ever crunchy enough. If he ate a caterpillar, it wasn't soft enough. The sunny days were too hot. The rainy days were too... well, too wet.

Worst of all, in his opinion, were all the other birds. I'iwi were too obnoxious. 'Amakihi were too yellow. Mejiro were too green. 'Akepa were too orange, unless they were female 'akepa, in which case they were too green. 'Io were too hungry.

I grant you that, since 'io like to eat 'apapane, he may have had a point with that last one.

His sister, on the other hand, was a celebrator. She savored the taste of the nectar in the smallest ohī'a blossom. She enjoyed the crunchy bugs and slurped down the soft caterpillars with the same enthusiasm. She let the rain cool her and she spread her wings to dry in the heat of the sun.

As for other birds, well. She sang with other 'apapane, chirped with the i'iwi and the 'amakihi and the mejiro and the 'akepa and everyone else she met. She was sure there something good to say about the 'io, but she'd have to find a safe way to chat with one to find out what it was.

Her brother perched in an ohī'a tree dripping with blossoms and moaned. His sister sang joyful songs in a tree with a single flower. Her brother insulted birds that came by about their feathers, their songs, and their diets. His sister complimented their flight and their colors and their voices.

Now, not every day is a good day for an 'apapane. It can get pretty cold on a rainy night, and they've got to watch out for hunting 'io. Sometimes lots of trees are in blossom, and sometimes there's just a few. She wasn't always happy. Sometimes it took time to find food, or a dry place, or to get through a long cold night.

But in the good times, on the good days, she celebrated the good things, whatever they were. Other birds joined her to share in the nectar or the sunshine and always in the joy of being in her presence.

Her brother went through bad times with grim satisfaction that all his woeful predictions had come true once more. And when bad times turned to good, he... sat glumly in the tree and complained about the nectar, and the bugs, and the sun, and the rain, and the way that nobody seemed to want to be around him.

He made his bad times harder, and his good times glum. She made her good times better, and her bad times easier. Given the choice, my friends, I think I'd rather be like her.

by Eric Anderson