

# Story: Welcome

May 18, 2025

Acts 11:1-13

John 13:31-35

The young 'amakihi was nervous. She had been busy growing up, which 'amakihi do a lot quicker than human beings do, but there was a lot to pack into that time. There was eating, and learning what to eat. There was taking care of her feathers, which changed when she molted and the feather lengths changed. And of course there was flying.

Then she had to learn about eating again, because there were things she could get to with working wings that she couldn't get to in a nest. She learned about new bugs, new fruits, and new flowers. She'd been too busy to be nervous.

She was nervous now, though, because her parents had announced that the family would join a flock for the summer. She wasn't really used to other birds. She'd met an auntie or an uncle or two, and of course her tutu, but these would be strange 'amakihi. Would they like her? Would they be mean to her?

It made her more nervous to realize that the flock wouldn't include just 'amakihi. It would include 'akepa, 'alawi, and scariest of all, 'apapane. She knew there were a lot of 'apapane around. She'd seen far more of them than she had 'amakihi. She'd also seen them chase 'amakihi through the forest, even her own father. "I got too close to their nest," he'd explained, and that made sense because she'd seen him chase other birds away from her nest, but still. The 'apapane made her nervous.

"It will be all right," said her father. "It's different when birds aren't worried about nests and eggs."

"It will be all right," said her mother. "You'll make it all right."

The day came when she and her brother and her parents flew over to an ohi'a tree filled with other birds. There were other 'amakihi, and she knew some of them because her tutu were there. There was 'akepa and 'alawi showing off their green and bright orange feathers. Mostly, though, there were 'apapane. They hopped through the branches, singing their beautiful songs, and looking very sharp in their red and black feathers.

One of them, who was keeping rather quiet, hopped over to the branch where she was sitting, keeping very quiet and hoping nobody would notice her.

“Hi,” said the ‘apapane. “What kind of bird are you?”

“I’m an ‘amakihī,” she said. “And you’re an ‘apapane.”

“I am,” he said, and looking rather nervous, said, “I feel really dumb. I’ve never seen most of these birds before. Do you know any of them?”

“Well, I know my family,” she said, “and I’ve seen a couple of these other birds before,” – she didn’t mention that they’d been chasing her father away from their nest – “but most of these birds are as new to me as they are to you.”

“Oh, good,” said the ‘apapane. “I guess this is new to most of us youngsters?”

“I think it is,” said the ‘amakihī. “I’ve been worried that nobody would like me.”

“You’ve made me feel better,” said the ‘apapane. “I think most birds would like you for that.”

“And you’ve made me feel welcome,” said the ‘amakihī. “Thank you so much for that.”

Mother had known, after all. She had made it all right.

*by Eric Anderson*