

Story: Following the I'iwi

August 17, 2025

Jeremiah 23:23-29

Hebrews 11:29-12:2

During the summer, plenty of the forest birds form small flocks which may include 'apapane, 'amakihi, 'akepa, and so on. Plenty of those birds may fly about and forage by themselves as well, but one little flock on the slopes of Mauna Loa was having a bad day. They just weren't finding much in the way of food.

"I'm hungry," complained an 'amakihi.

"We all are," replied an 'apapane, and the other birds agreed.

"What are we going to do about it?" asked the first 'amakihi.

"Does anyone have any good ideas?" asked another 'apapane, looking around at the other birds. From the shaking heads, nobody did.

That's when they heard the squeaky sound of an i'iwi. They watched as he rose from a nearby tree – one which didn't have much in the way of flowers on it, circled once or twice, and flew off.

"What was that about?" asked an 'apapane.

"I don't know," said an 'akepa.

"How about we follow him?" said the first 'amakihi, the one who was hungry.

Nobody could think of a good reason not to, so the little flock took to the air and flew in the same direction the i'iwi had taken. For a little while they just flew over flowerless trees, but then a few ohia blossoms appeared. Things were looking up. Eventually the i'iwi settled in a tree just dripping with flowers, surrounded by plenty of other blossoming trees as well.

The i'iwi squawked a little unpleasantly at them – they're not great singers, the i'iwi – but didn't come out to chase them away as they settled into surrounding trees and began checking the flowers for nectar and the branches for bugs. There wasn't much sound for a while other than some satisfied songs and wing flutters as they shifted from branch to branch.

"How did you know?" said an 'apapane to the 'amakihi.

“How did I know what?” said the ‘amakihi.

“How did you know that the i’iwi would lead us to flowers?”

The ‘amakihi shrugged. “I didn’t know,” he said, “but as sad as it is that the i’iwi isn’t a great singer, and as nasty as they can get when they’re upset about something, they’re really good at finding trees in blossom. I’d trust them to find food any day of the week.”

“You’d trust an i’iwi?” said the ‘apapane in wonder.

“I trust an i’iwi to do what an i’iwi does,” said the ‘amakihi. “And look. This one did.”

The i’iwi, who had overheard all this, let out a contented squawk, hopped to another flower, and settled in to sip the sweet nectar.

by Eric Anderson