

Story: The 'Alawi Who Was Noticed

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Proverbs 25:6-7

Luke 14:1, 7-14

Up on the mountain slopes, there are a lot of very colorful birds. The i'iwi and the 'apapane are the brightest in color, with those glistening red feathers and the contrasting black of their wings. They're not alone, though. The 'amakihi makes a pretty brave sight in yellow, and the 'akiapola'au is brighter still. Add in the colors of the flowers on the trees and on the bushes, and the forest is a pretty colorful place.

And then there's the 'alawi. The 'alawi isn't brightly colored. It's grayish green with some yellow tint on the belly. It's not even a strong singer. It has a pretty plain kind of call. It's so understated, in fact, that people went many years before making the connection between the old Hawaiian word "'alawi" and a bird westerners called the "Hawai'i Creeper."

Mostly, this hasn't bothered the 'alawi at all, since they don't pay much attention to what people think of them. But one of them did start to feel bad. In the midst of a forest full of bright red 'apapane, orange 'akepa, and yellow 'akiapola'au, who would notice a little green 'alawi?

"It's a pity I'm so drab," he told himself one day. "I'm going to change that."

I have to admit that his approach had some promise. He was going to start wearing jewelry – that is, he was going to tuck a flower behind his ear, as we see so often from human women in Hawai'i. He was so clever that he came up with the idea himself – he really didn't pay much attention to people.

There was, however, a problem. Oh, he could grasp flowers with his feet quite well. But when you want to tuck a flower behind your ear, it really helps to have, well, ears.

An 'apapane watched him do this and asked, "Why? I mean, why?"

"I want to be noticeable," he said with some embarrassment. "I don't want to be drab."

"I'm noticing," said the 'apapane, "and I guess you aren't drab. But you do look silly. Is that how you want to be noticed?"

This might have gone on for a while, but it turned out to be another of those dry times in the forest, and it got harder and harder to find things to eat. For the 'alawi that's mostly bugs. Everyone in the forest was feeling the pinch in their bellies.

Our friend the 'alawi, however, got lucky one day. He found a stand of trees that were better watered, and the flowers on them had attracted a good crowd of insects. He flew over to feed, but stopped. He didn't want anyone else to be hungry while he ate his fill. So he started to call the 'alawi's plan song. That didn't seem to attract anyone, so he found an 'akiapola'au and brought him to those trees. The 'akiapola'au whistled, and some other birds and some other birds and some other birds made their way over, sang their songs, and settled in to eat.

Hopping along a tree branch, the 'alawi met the 'apapane he'd seen a few days before.

"You found a way to be noticed, youngster," said the 'apapane.

"I did?" said the 'alawi.

"You did," said the 'apapane. "We've all noticed you, and not for wearing a flower. We've all noticed you for being the considerate and compassionate bird you are. Well done. And thank you."

by Eric Anderson