

Story: Peace

September 21, 2025

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

1 Timothy 2:1-7

He was a yellow-billed cardinal, and he was young. He was so young, in fact, that the feathers on the top of his head weren't red; they were brown. He was so young that his bill wasn't yellow, it was tan.

He was old enough to be living mostly on his own, finding his own food among the seeds and berries, and his own shelter for the night. He was old enough to enjoy a sunrise or a sunset, and he was old enough to enjoy sitting quietly in the sun.

What he wasn't old enough for was to understand what "peace" was.

That may seem odd, given that sitting quietly and enjoying the sunshine sounds pretty peaceful, but it didn't always feel that way. For one thing, if he sat in the sunshine for too long, he'd start to feel hungry. Feeling hungry, he thought, wasn't very peaceful. I guess he had a point there. Being uncomfortable isn't very peaceful.

Worse than that, though, when he got hungry, he had to find food. He knew how to do that, of course. That wasn't the problem. The problem was that other birds would show up, and he didn't like that. Other yellow-billed cardinals were usually OK – he knew a couple of them that tended to tease him – but he really didn't like it when different kinds of birds turned up. House finches made him nervous. House sparrows were kind of scary. Saffron finches made him feel uneasy about his rather dull coloring.

Worst of all, as you might guess, were the mynas. For one thing, they had brighter yellow bills than he did. For another, they were a good deal bigger. And, of course, they were often really loud, really argumentative, and really frightening.

As he got older and his head feathers turned red and his bill turned more yellow, he still didn't like it when other birds turned up while he was feeding. He didn't really notice that the finches and sparrows and koea really paid him no mind. They just got on with looking for bugs and seeds and worms to eat. So when the myna turned up near him while he was eating, he jumped.

"What's wrong, youngster?" asked the myna. "Is there something wrong?"

"Oh, no, myna sir," said the yellow-billed cardinal. "Nothing wrong at all."

"You jumped," said the myna. "Did something startle you?"

"Well," said the cardinal, "you did. You caught me by surprise when you landed."

"Oh, that's fine," said the myna, who sounded somewhat relieved. "Sorry about that. You had me worried for a minute there."

"You worried?" said the yellow-billed cardinal. "Why?"

"Some birds get upset about mynas," said the myna. "They think we're loud and obnoxious. They don't like it when we're around."

The yellow-billed cardinal had thought such things, so he thought that now he'd better stay quiet.

"I'm glad you're not like that," said the myna. "I could do with a bit of peace today."

That's when the yellow-billed cardinal learned what peace could be – a time when creatures who were rather different could live side-by-side, meet their needs, and not fear one another. A yellow-billed cardinal could be safe from the bullying he feared from a bigger bird. A myna could be safe from the rejection and disdain of a smaller bird.

"I could use a bit of peace myself," said the yellow-billed cardinal. "Let's enjoy it while we can."

by Eric Anderson