

Story: 'Apapane Faith

October 5, 2025

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

Luke 17:5-10

Birds, by their very nature, rely on faith. Every bird knows about gravity; every bird knows that what goes up must come down. Every bird knows that while flight is the most natural thing in the world to them, it is also the most unnatural thing in the world. Somehow they hold those two things together.

At least, most of the time they do.

One young 'apapane had learned to fly from his parents. He'd flown any number of times on his own. He was also still pretty young, so a lot of his feathers were still grey and brown. That had been fine. Now, however, some of his adult colors were coming in, so he had red feathers mixed among the grey and brown, and he had a speckled look. Frankly, I think he looked really interesting, but he thought he looked odd, even a little ugly.

With feathers that looked like that, he thought, how could he keep up with flying?

I don't think that makes much sense, do you? He'd been flying just fine, and suddenly he didn't believe he could fly because his feathers were changing? But you know, the first step in doing something is believing that you can do the thing. He stopped believing he could do the thing.

So he stopped flying.

He did manage to feed himself by journeying to other trees in the slowest, and possibly most exhausting way possible. He hopped from twig to twig, then from branch to branch, and when branches got close he jumped from tree to tree. It took time, and it wore him out, and frankly made him hungrier, but he did it.

It was a funny way to live for an 'apapane.

It took a while for the other birds to notice, because he did turn up among his family and friends, even if he turned up later than everyone else. They just assumed he'd flown off in some other direction and finally got turned around the right way.

It was Tutu, his grandmother, who noticed the way he hopped, rather than flew, from tree to tree. She hopped over to his branch and said, "Are you all right, grandson? Have you hurt your wings?"

"No, they feel fine," said her grandson.

"Then why are you hopping everywhere?" she asked. "Why aren't you flying?"

"Well, just look at me," he said. "Do these look like flying feathers? If I take off with these I'll crash a moment later."

"You think you can't fly because of these feathers?" asked his grandmother.

"That's right, Tutu," he said.

Grandmother thought. She was a wise old bird, and she knew that you have to believe you can fly if you're going to fly. She was tempted to let him hop around until he finished molting, but she knew he'd be pretty miserable the whole time. And who knows? He might never come around to believing again. That would be sad.

"Grandson, are you an 'apapane?"

"Yes, of course I am," he said, puzzled.

"Do you believe that you have wings?"

"Of course I do."

"Do you believe in your feathers?"

"They're right here," he said.

"I believe in your feathers, too," said Tutu, "the ones you have and the ones you'll grow. In fact, all your family believes in them. Do you believe us?"

"I'm not sure," he said.

"It takes just a little belief," said his grandmother, "and that's the amount of belief it takes to spread your wings. You've done it before. You can do it now."

"Believe it. Spread your wings, grandson. Fly."

by Eric Anderson