

Eighth reading

Te rongopai kawea i te Āhere Tane/The Angel Tane brings news

In the cool of the evening Āhere Tane/the Angel Tane went to his forest and bush and birds. The forest had finished working for the day. The ferns had stopped dancing their babies on their backs and had told them it was nearly time to go to sleep. The birds were gathering for their evening waiata of love and praise to Papa/Mother God. As usual the mischievous young tuis were pushing each other off their perches and laughing. Then they all looked up saw Angel Tane's face beaming with joy, and all the forest stood still.

Kauri said, "Āhere Tane, you must have wonderful news!"

"I have", said Angel Tane, "the most wonderful news that the world has ever heard!" He told them about Papa/Mother God sending the Lord Jesus to earth to be born as a tiny baby. He told them how he would be born in a stable across the sea, and how a sparrow would spread the news, and how it would be passed by land and sea birds right around the world to Aotearoa New Zealand. He told how Mother God said the piwakaka was to be the messenger from the sea birds to the forest, and that the red buds of the Pohutukawa would be a sign that the birth of Jesus was near.

Trees and birds stood still in great wonderment and joy. Then over the great quietness came the desperate voice of te Moana/the Sea. "Who will tell my fish? My poor fish! There is no one to tell them!"

"You have all your sea birds," said the Forest. "They can tell them."

"They say they will not," said te Moana. "They say the little fish are so silly they never stay still long enough for a bird to talk to them. They say if they go near enough to a big fish for conversation the big fish bites a leg off them before they can say a word! What will happen to my poor fish?"

The trees and birds looked sad until Pohutukawa said, "I will go and live by the sea, and dip my branches in the water and tell the fishes and the seaweed. For always when they see my red stamens floating on the water they will know his birthday is very near".

The trees and the birds tried to persuade Pohutukawa not to go. They told her how the gales would blow and the waves wash over her. They said her branches would grow crooked and her roots would have to cling to the rock. For answer, Pohutukawa called to nga pakiaka ia/her roots.

"Roots, will you learn to live on the rocks by the sea so that I can tell the fish that our sweet Lord Jesus is to be born?"

And the Roots answered, "We will, and gladly. We will grow tough and strong, and learn to hold you firmly when the gales blow. We will learn to get food from nga kāmaka me te moana/the rocks and the salt water.

Te Tinana/the Trunk said, “We will learn to put out red roots and how to make our wood tough. We will learn to bend and not to break in gales”.

The leaves said, “We will grow fine hairs so that the salt spray will not damage us”.

Pohutukawa said “Thank you my children. We will go and tell the fishes about the coming of Ihu Karaiti, the sweet Lord Jesus”.

So now Pohutukawa lives around lakes, and on rocky cliffs of the sea, dipping her branches so near the waves that often nga tio/oysters grow on them. Always she whispers, “The little Lord Jesus is coming. The birthday of our sweet Lord Jesus is nearly here, nearly here, [*getting softer*] nearly here, nearly here...”.

[*Pause.*]

Kia whakapaingia te Atua./Thanks be to God.

[From *Ohuka Long, Long Ago*, by Iris Mackareth]