

Defying Gravity Post from Pastor Karyn
June 23, 2020

I have an absolute favorite song – most of you probably do. Mine is a song that I can listen to anytime, anywhere, and at any moment -- and no matter what is happening in my life it makes me smile. It is a song that takes me to a place that helps me through good times and bad. It is a song that reminds me of being in the theater in New York City hearing it for the very first time. Whenever I feel down and need a lift – I listen and it turns me around in ways that still surprise me. The song is “Defying Gravity” from the Broadway musical *Wicked*.

The musical is based on the novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* by Gregory Maguire, which is written as a parallel story to the *Wizard of Oz*. It is the story of how two young women, Glinda and Elphaba, unlikely friends. As the story progresses through many twists and turns, Glinda becomes the Good Witch of the North and Elphaba becomes the Wicked Witch of the West. The musical is an intriguing and fascinating journey of friendship, betrayal, love, and loss that brings the two women to their respective roles in the later *Wizard of Oz*.

The song, “Defying Gravity,” is sung by Elphaba after she makes a critical decision to take off on her own when her request to the Wizard is turned down and he uses her for his own purposes. You see – she was born unnaturally green and longed to be like everyone else. Her friend, Glinda, was a perky, popular blonde who seemingly had it all. Elphaba longs to be normal and when the Wizard turns her heart’s desire against her, she flies off into the western sky being defiant about being true to herself and her desire to bring down his evil rule (remember this is not the Wizard of Oz of Disney).

“Defying Gravity” is a special song for me. In it Elphaba is determined to go off on her own to live into her truth. Glinda tries to convince her to stay, but to no avail. To the request for her to stay, Elphaba sings ...

So if you care to find me
Look to the western sky!
As someone told me lately:
“Ev’ryone deserves the chance to fly!”
And if I’m flying solo
At least I’m flying free

To those who'd ground me
Take a message back from me
Tell them how I am
Defying gravity
I'm flying high
Defying gravity
And soon I'll match them in renown
And nobody in all of Oz
No Wizard that there is or was
Is ever gonna bring me down!

There are people in the world who do not want us to speak our truth or be ourselves or call out injustice. There are people who do not want to see the good in others. There are people out there who seemingly want us to fail. There are people out there who want to turn our heart's desire against us. There are people who do not understand our passion or our zeal. There are people out there, like the Wizard, who want to bring us down.

Not me – I fly knowing that I am who God created me to be. I fly knowing that others are green* like me – not like everyone else but still proud to be counter-cultural, truth speaking, advocacy-seeking, and loving despite the hate, trauma, illness, and uncertainty in the world right now. I fly knowing that God wants us to call our world into doing the right things. And I encourage you to fully accept your calling to fly knowing that nobody in all of Oz ... no Wizard that there is or was ... is ever gonna bring you down!

Won't you join me in flying high, sharing the truth of our faith, being welcoming and loving, working for justice for all, and seeing the uniqueness of each and every child of God.

If there ever was a moment when we need to affirm who we are as a high-flying Gloria Dei followers of Jesus, this is it. See you in the sky!

Grace and Peace –

PK

* I know it's dangerous saying I'm green in this post but it's the color she was in the story and musical. You Eagles' fans better not expect me to wear green again any time soon.