

“Defying Gravity: The Wizard and I”
Psalm 146:3-7

What would you say to me if I told you that, often without realizing it, we give complete strangers the power to control how we feel about ourselves?

Think about it. How do you feel when someone you care about doesn't text or call you back? How do you feel when a post online gets ignored, or when a boss or a loved one fails to notice your effort?

No matter how evolved, educated, or confident we become, we are continuously tempted to place our trust in external authorities while denying the divinely implanted wisdom within us. We hunt for validation outside ourselves because somewhere along the way, we lost the ability to trust our own God-given inner wisdom.

Disillusionment: The Wizard Behind the Curtain

In the musical *Wicked*, we see this human struggle vividly portrayed in the character of Elphaba. She builds her entire identity and hope around the Wizard of Oz. She believes that he holds the key to her life—that if she can just meet him, everything will make sense, her pain will disappear, and she will finally belong. In her song, “*The Wizard and I*,” she sings with wide-eyed expectation about how the Wizard is going to fix everything for her: <https://youtu.be/9zyPT0a7sx0>.

But when she finally pulls back the curtain, she doesn't find a savior; she discovers a fraud. The Wizard is merely a master of manipulation and theatrical illusion, consumed by his own desire for power and control.

Many of us know the heartbreak of that moment. We experience a similar, painful crisis of faith when an institutional authority, a spiritual leader, a hero, or our own carefully constructed theological “bubbles” fail us. This story of disillusionment is as old as humanity itself.

Our scripture today speaks directly to this human vulnerability. Listen to the words of Psalm 146:3–7:

“Do not put your trust in princes,
in mortals, in whom there is no help.
When their breath departs, they return to the earth;
on that very day their plans perish.
Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,
who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.”

The Psalms were the prayers and worship songs of Israel, capturing the spiritual journey of a community. The biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann identified three movements in the Psalms:

1. **Orientation** – when life feels stable and good.
2. **Disorientation** – when crisis hits, illusions shatter, and we are forced into lament.
3. **Reorientation** – when we pass through the storm and emerge with a deeper, wiser faith grounded in God's enduring grace.

Psalm 146 is a psalm of **reorientation**. It offers praise to God without ignoring the fragile nature of earthly powers. The psalm invites us to stop placing our total trust in human leaders or societal structures that inevitably fade. Human systems will always falter because they are limited by fear, ego, and mortality. God, however, is faithful forever, executing justice and bringing life to the weary.

And here is the good news: this faithful God is not distant. God's presence is as close to you as your own heartbeat. You do not need a “wizard” to grant you worth; you already possess access to divine wisdom within your soul.

Looking Within: The Indwelling God

Much like Elphaba, we are frequently lured into believing that external authority, approval, or prestige will grant us the meaning we crave. For Elphaba, it was the Wizard. For us, it might be social status, career titles, perfectionism, or the pride of belonging to the "right" group, institution, or ideology.

Yet true wisdom cannot be conferred by any human system. It is discovered when we reorient our lives and surrender to Divine Love within us.

The teacher and monk Father Thomas Keating once wrote:

"The chief thing that separates us from God is the thought that we are separated from God. If we get rid of that thought, our troubles will be greatly reduced. We fail to believe that we are always with God and that God is part of every reality... God constantly speaks to us through each other as well as from within. The interior experience of God's presence activates our capacity to perceive the divine in everything else—in people, in events, in nature."

To "defy gravity"—to rise above the pressure of social approval, fear, and self-doubt—we must stop searching outward for what God has already placed inward. Public opinion changes. Cultural standards shift. But the inner light of God remains constant.

As we walk through life, working alongside others and serving our community, our calling is to hold tightly to this unbreakable inner connection.

The Unbroken Thread

Poet William Stafford captured this quiet, enduring truth in his poem, "*The Thread*":

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

Experiential Exercise: Holding the Thread

At this time, I invite each of you to take in your hands the piece of thread you received today. Hold it between your fingers. Feel its weightlessness, yet notice its strength. Close your eyes for a moment if you feel comfortable doing so, and feel the texture of this thread in your hands. This thread represents the divine presence woven into the very fabric of your being. It represents God's unchanging love, the quiet inner voice of wisdom that has been with you since the day you were born. Think for a moment about the "Wizards" you have depended on—the people whose approval you've chased, the standards you've broken yourself trying to meet, or the institutions you expected to fix your life.

Gently release the tension in your shoulders.

You do not need to perform for God. You do not need an external ruler to validate your humanity. In times of uncertainty, when circumstances shift, when grief hits, or when life feels disorienting, people may wonder how you are holding together. You are holding together because you are holding onto the Thread.

Look down at the string in your hand. Take this thread with you today. Put it in your pocket, wrap it around your wrist, or place it on your desk or nightstand. Let it be a tangible reminder throughout your week:

- **When self-doubt creeps in:** Touch the thread and remember that you are rooted in Divine Love.
- **When external voices demand your compliance or perfection:** Touch the thread and trust your God-given inner light.
- **When the world feels chaotic:** Hold the thread, knowing that while everything around you changes, God's faithfulness does not.

You were not made to live tied down by the illusions of external power. Like Elphaba coming into her own truth, you are invited to trust the God who dwells within you, step out onto the wind of grace, and

defy the gravity of expectation. Hold fast to the Thread. Trust the Light within. And soar. Amen.