

The Divine Comedy

September 2018

{I encourage you to click this link [HERE](#), and listen to the magnificent, transcendent voice of Aretha Franklin sing "PRECIOUS LORD"}

For me, the two best gospel albums of all-time are Johnny Cash's *MY MOTHER'S HYMBOOK* and Aretha Franklin's *GOSPEL GREATS*. I return time and time again to these two albums. Both collection of songs lift my spirits and fill me with hope and love each and every time I hear the songs on these albums.

Why you ask? Authenticity, I say.

When Brother Johnny sings the line, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?", I truly believe that Cash is asking us this question because he was there. He was there. He was there! Every single day, to overcome his personal demons and exorcise his guilt, Johnny Cash died to himself with a trust that he would be resurrected in Christ. I believe him ... he was there. And it causes me to tremble.

I feel the same authenticity of her deep and profound faith in God from Sister Aretha when she sings the words, "Be not dismayed ...". There is a joy in her voice that even in the midst of the struggles of her days, cannot be snuffed out. Life wasn't all glamor and fame for Sister Aretha. She knew pain and loss. She knew being the target of hate and trolls. She saw how the powers that be consistently oppressed her people, and she lived through the riots that nearly burned down beloved Detroit. But her voice was that of a true believer! And she lifted us up with the eternal prophecy of the redemptive power of grace and strength that comes to us when we lean on God in hard times. I believe every word she sings in, *GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU*. Yes, yes, Sister Aretha, yes, God will!

Aretha Franklin was known the world over as The Queen of Soul. But her title was not just about the music that she so beautifully and powerfully sang. She wasn't the Queen of Soul because she sold the most albums, had the most #1

Hits, or because she was the first to sing soul music. I think the title she so richly deserved as the Queen of Soul speaks so much more about the woman she was than the type of music she sang. She was so in tune with the human condition, and yet, she would not allow brokenness of the human predicament to win the day. Even when she sang popular music and R&B, she revealed her soul, her heart to us. She humbly exposed her uncompromisingly frailty to us all so that we could connect with something bigger than ourselves. She used her music to communicate an eternal love that is unconditional and accessible to us all in Christ.

Sister Aretha was reared in New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit, MI. Her father was the pastor of the congregation, and though young Aretha showed potential and a natural gift for song, her voice was timid and shy. It is said that many of her early solos were so soft that you could barely hear her over the piano. But her church nurtured her to use her voice as a gift from God to the world. They clapped even when she missed a note. They encouraged her when she needed encouraging. They loved on her when she was feeling too small to sing to God. And her New Bethel Baptist Church instilled in her a faith in a God that would take care of her when she was dismayed.

Thank you, New Bethel Baptist Church. Well done good and faithful servants.

Rest in Peace, Sister Aretha. Godspeed. Thank you for all you did to raise hearts, break chains, for making us *THINK* and for bringing a little heavenly soul here on earth.

Peace. Love. Understanding.

Pastor Darryl

Ps. In honor of Aretha Franklin's death, I asked David and Kay-Marie to sing "God Will Take Care of You" on Sunday, August 19. Their performance of this gospel classic in tribute to Sister Aretha is on our website.