

**BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI**

**THE WORSHIP OF GOD • AUGUST 9, 2020**

***“IT’S ALL ABOUT SOUL”***

**The Scripture**

**Matthew 6:25-33**

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore, do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

**The Message**

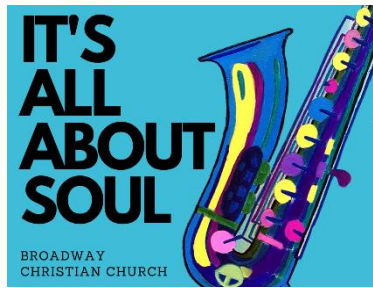
***It’s All About Soul: Revolution***

**Mark Briley**

Synopsis: Author Mark Scandrette wrote about a conversation with his friend, a tattoo artist, who was inking a client’s back while they were discussing the state of the Church today. The man under the needle turned and interjected, *“Jesus is cool, it’s just that they have messed with Jesus. I mean, Christianity was at its best when it was secret and hidden, and you could die for it.”*

A bit crass, perhaps, but left Scandrette wondering, *“Am I in some measure complicit in the domestication of Jesus?”* In his time, Jesus was a disturber of assumptions and cultural norms. With the signature phrase, *“You have heard that it was said... but I tell you,”* he broke prevalent myths about what it meant to seek God. Jesus was a revolutionary. Are we?

*“But strive first for the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”* (Matthew 6:33)



Bobby McFerrin wrote a little song in 1988 that dethroned Guns N' Roses "Sweet Child of Mine" as the number one song on the Billboard charts<sup>1</sup>. Maybe you remember it and can help me out when I point to you to complete the line.

*Here's a little song I wrote  
You might want to sing it note for note*  
**Don't worry, be happy**  
*In every life we have some trouble  
But when you worry, you make it double*  
**Don't worry, be happy**



It's such a feel good song, isn't it? McFerrin said it summed up the best philosophy of life in four words that he could think of. He pulled the line from a poster of the Indian mystic, Meher Baba, that quoted that very phrase, "*Don't worry, be happy!*"

The song first came out in the film *Cocktail* starring Tom Cruise but exploded when released on its own, winning McFerrin three Grammys including *Song of the Year*. It was the first a cappella song to reach the Billboard Hot 100 chart. George H. W. Bush used it as his presidential campaign theme song in 1988. It has been used in countless movie and television scenes as well as marketing campaigns including a stellar Huggies Diaper commercial a few years ago because nothing says "*Don't worry, be happy*" like a dirty diaper.

The song became an unofficial anthem in Jamaica after Hurricane Gilbert struck the island in the fall of 1988. It was used as the song sung by the *Big Mouth Billy Bass* toy made in 2000 and appears on Rolling Stone's list of the Fifteen Best Whistling Songs of All Time. "*Don't worry, be happy.*" Why has the song done so well? It's got a good vibe to it for sure, but there's got to be more to it than that. Maybe it hits close enough to home that everyone resonates with the need to worry less and be more content with life as it is.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don%27t\\_Worry,\\_Be\\_Happy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don%27t_Worry,_Be_Happy). Source for all of my info connected to this song.

But... is the message of the song all that realistic? It can't be that easy, right? "*Don't worry about it,*" we say. "*Forget about it...*" they say in the northeast. But you can't, can you? Your bills are piling up, and the creditors aren't the ones saying, "*Don't worry about it.*" The doctor is calling it minor surgery, but it's your body that will soon be losing some of its parts. COVID lures everywhere right now, and it's wearisome, and parents are wondering if it's safe to send kids to school, and at the same time if they can manage another semester at home. There's *some* cause for worry, right? Can we really *not* worry?

By nature, as a middle child perhaps, I have the worry gene. Up until the time I was ten or eleven, I couldn't go to sleep until everyone in my family was home and in their rightful place. Drove my family nuts. And we didn't have cell phones and the like growing up, so there was no constant way of staying in touch. So you just had to wait until they came home, and the waiting is where the worry virus thrives most. "*Oh no,*" I would think as time went on – "*Something must have happened to them – car wreck, locked out of the office, alien abduction.*" But they always came home and eventually we all went to sleep. We decided laying out plans would help alleviate worry. "*What if there was a fire in the house?*" I worried. We devised an escape plan for every member of the family from every room in our home. We put up little stickers in each bedroom window so the firefighters would know which rooms to look for people if the house was ablaze. Still worried. I pretty much grew out of it, but it showed up from time to time. I worried about my siblings when we were teens – wanting to make sure they were protected and okay. Apparently, I was just a big wad of worry. "*Don't worry, be happy,*" didn't do it for me.

But then Jesus has to get all up in this worry business... how it's got nothing to offer your soul. He asks, "*Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*" It's a question for the ages – one as poignant today as it was when it first crossed his lips. And Lord knows we've invested huge amounts of time worrying about stuff. One study suggested the average American spends more than six-and-a-half years of their life in the actual state of worrying. What do we have to show for it? Have we added even a single hour to our lives?

Jesus was certainly asking the question rhetorically – the answer was to be a resounding "*No.*" But we can't really know, right? If a man dies at 89 years, 235 days, and 14 hours, who's to say that without all that fretting he would've lived 89 years, 235 days and 15 hours? How can we possibly know?

Well, we're in luck. It just so happens that a scientific study considering this very subject was published a decade ago in an issue of the Mayo Clinic Proceedings medical journal. We don't know if the researchers had Jesus' point about worry adding a single hour to one's life in their minds, but the conclusion was that Jesus was right.

Shocker! I know. What's more is that the study suggests that not being a chronic worrier can add well more than an hour to your lifespan; perhaps years!

The study began back in the "mid-'60s when some 7,000 students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill took the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, a test that, among other things, measured the participants' tendency to be optimistic or pessimistic. Of that group, 1,630 were found by the test to be clearly pessimists and 923 to be clearly optimists. The rest fell somewhere in the middle of a continuum between the clear extremes. Over the next four decades, 476 of those who had taken the test died from a variety of causes. By tracking and collating all this information, researchers determined that the pessimists had a significantly greater likelihood of dying sooner from any cause than did the optimists. As the dry language of the findings report puts it, "... *those who scored as pessimistic had decreased rates of longevity compared with optimistic individuals.*" It also said, "*The current results replicate, in a non-medical sample, those of [earlier studies] that suggest that optimism is associated with increased survival.*" Worry may very well be a killer!<sup>2</sup>

Now pessimism and worry can be defined differently of course. We could say pessimism is an outlook about things in general, and worry is a response to specific matters... but... at the root, both pessimism and worry are related to a shortage of hope and trust. "*Pessimism, which has no confidence that things will work out, can breed despair, and that word literally means "un-hope."*

Jesus may be asking more about trust than about worry. He says, "*Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to God than birds. Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion – do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it?*" And Jesus' 'zing' is this: "*If God offers such care and grace to the birds and the flowers, can't you trust that God holds your wellbeing with greater interest?*" Don't worry, be happy?

But Jesus – is it fair to say, "*What's with the anxiety?*" by pointing to the birds and flowers and saying – "*Look, **they** aren't worried about anything.*" "*IT'S A LILY JESUS!*" "*Do birds of the air have mortgage payments? Do lilies of the field have aging parents, who depend on them for long-term care? No, they do not. Only humans have problems like these, which goes a long way toward explaining why we, of all creatures, are the most anxious.*" Why do we worry?

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<sup>2</sup> This study was found and used by Bob Kaylor, Senior Writer for Homiletics and found on homileticonline.com. The piece on "striving" was also influenced by Kaylor's work.

Barbara Brown Taylor<sup>3</sup> says “*We worry because we have been given the gift of human consciousness. We worry because we are able to imagine a future we cannot control. We worry because we are afraid of losing what we love.*” We can’t just say, “*Buck it up – have some faith. Don’t you trust God?*” We are not made *not* to worry. It’s a defense mechanism – it can, at times, give us a hyper-focus to tackle something deeply important. We cannot love someone without worrying about threats to his or her well-being. We can’t be sensitive to others without at least some concern that we haven’t done all we could or should do. We can’t listen to the news these days without some uneasiness about the direction things seem to be going. And logically, you can tell me, “*Hey – God wins in the end so trust that.*” Ok. I can buy that. But we aren’t wired that way. We cannot neatly compartmentalize our anxiety and talk ourselves out of worrying. Much of our worry is based in our emotions, not our thinking. Being told, “*Don’t worry, be happy,*” isn’t really all that helpful.

But what if this is really an adventure in missing the point? This passage may not really be Jesus’ dissertation on worry and how to avoid it by having a well put together faith. Verse 34 in Matthew’s 6<sup>th</sup> chapter has Jesus saying, “*Don’t worry about tomorrow for today’s trouble is enough for today.*” Jesus acknowledges here that worry is clearly a part of our lives. It’s the verse before that is really Jesus’ thrust: “*Strive first for the kingdom of God... and the rest will take care of itself.*” Replace ‘worry’ as best you can with ‘striving’. Strive for it. “*Strive means to exert a lot of energy and effort toward a goal.*” This is far from simply waiting around until some eventual kingdom of God brings ultimate relief. It’s an active participation in the revolution of the kingdom of God. Pour yourself in the kingdom work that is always needed. As we do that, some of the things we fret about are going to become non-issues because we’re dealing with more important things.



We’ve lost another great Civil Rights leader in John Lewis. So many tributes pouring in... many saying he was one of the few who genuinely acted out of his faith... striving for the realm of God to come to be on earth. My goodness what he endured and what he poured his life into.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor quotes in this message are from “*What Did Jesus Ask?*” Pg. 5. Time Inc, Books. 2015.





Jason Isbell   
@JasonIsbell

Imagine what a man like John Lewis could've done for us all if he hadn't needed to use his whole life to fight for something as simple as fairness.

Singer song-writer, Jason Isbell tweeted in tribute to the death of Civil Rights leader John Lewis saying, "*Imagine what a man like John Lewis could've done for us all if he hadn't needed to use his whole life to fight for something as simple as fairness.*" The truth is... we were all created to contribute to the revolution of God's love unleashed in the world. We're here to move the meter towards

the Ultimate Concern – which is a world reconciled in God's love. You can worry about grandiose things... or you could focus on the revolution you can do with whatever time, resources and voice you have. And friends... the world is listening now like never before. While the world is changing us, let us also change the world. Don't get lost in worry but prioritize your witness and see if such focus allows worry to find its place on the back burner. Be present to what you can be present to today and trust that if tomorrow is meant for us to move and breathe and serve, we'll have what we need to do so at that time. This turns worry into grace.

So much of this burden comes because we live with zero margin. This makes us impatient people which just escalates worry exponentially. My Great Uncle Johnny passed away a couple of years ago. Lived a great life – never met a kid he didn't love, and never did a kid meet Uncle Johnny that didn't think he was the coolest guy alive. Patience however – not a strength. Telling stories about his life, my second cousins, his kids, were remembering a big family trip they took one summer to Yellowstone National Park. When they reached the site of the world's most famous geyser, Old Faithful, they learned it had just erupted. Disappointing perhaps, but it's the most predictable geographical feature on the planet and erupts about every thirty-five minutes. Uncle Johnny said, "*Welp, sorry we missed it kids. Let's keep moving.*" They had traveled a tremendous distance to see Old Faithful, but they weren't going to wait another half hour. Zero margin... even on vacation.

But this season... this pandemic'd, quarantined, masked up season... is an unwelcomed disruption ... but a disruption, nonetheless. A time to get focused... not to simply wait idly. It's not easy, of course, but if life were easy, we would have no appreciation of what is on the other side of waiting. That's why our Vision Team is hard at work and will soon be asking for your contributions. We want to be part of the revolution at hand... a new world on the horizon where your efforts and my efforts combine to let Love lead us forward into something new and holy and healing. Let's not domesticate this opportunity.

Author Mark Scandrette wrote about a conversation with his friend, a tattoo artist, who was inking a client's back while they were discussing the state of the Church today. The man under the needle turned and interjected: "*Jesus is cool, it's just that they have*

*messed with Jesus. I mean, Christianity was at its best when it was secret and hidden and you could die for it.*” A bit crass, perhaps, but left Scandrette wondering, *“Am I in some measure complicit in the domestication of Jesus?”* In his time, Jesus was a disturber of assumptions and cultural norms. With the signature phrase, *“You have heard that it was said..., but I tell you,”* he broke prevalent myths about what it meant to seek God.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus was a revolutionary. He dropped worry to strive for something more. This is such a time. It was the vibe of Jesus Jones (*Jesus’ last name was not Jones... referring to the British band Jesus Jones*)... the band who 30-years ago dropped the lyrics, *“I was alive and I waited, waited. I was alive and I waited for this. Right here, right now, there is no other place I want to be. Right here, right now... watching the world wake up from history.”*

What a time! Are we worried? We could be. Concerned? Of course. But when you find yourself worrying about things you truly cannot control, transfer that urgent worry to strive for the revolution of God’s love in Christ. Catch yourself. Pause. Breathe. And think – *“What could I do right here, right now, that would fall into the category: “Striving for the kingdom.”*

We worry about the education of our children, the safety of our educators and school staffs as we imagine the potential of school starting soon. This is a concern for sure. But worry alone won’t educate our children or keep all safe. What can we do? We can support. Our Outreach team is creating snack bags and care packages for the staff of our Partner in Education and Early Childhood Learning Center North. It is one way to say, *“We’re with you. This matters! We care.”* That’s kingdom striving.

We worry about COVID realities. We worry about elections. We worry about justice and equality. But worrying doesn’t alleviate any issue. Don’t let your worry consume your time and freeze you from acting – get engaged in the striving kingdom work of God and see what that does for your worries. It won’t erase all of your worries – that’s not possible – but striving first for the kingdom of God will channel your energy in a way that grows your spirit and serves the people of God in ways that bring about the Way Jesus came to show us. Worry less about what you may lose and pour more energy into what God loves.

“If Jesus was truly human, as Christians insist he was, then he worried as much as anyone about losing what he loved. He just figured out how to let the loving surpass the losing. On days when I am having a hard time following his lead, it is sometimes enough to remember the distinction. However many hours I must live this life, with

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<sup>4</sup> Soul Graffiti by Mark Scandrette. Jasey-Bass Books. 2007. Pg. 31.

however little power to keep from losing even one of them, I do this day love being alive.”<sup>5</sup> We begin to learn that such is enough.

So can we not worry and be happy? Can we give up carrying the whole world in order to share in the revolution in a way that is in our daily ability to influence? I learned that this phrase Bobby McFerrin borrowed from the Indian mystic was only part of the phrase. “*Don’t worry, be happy!*” made the music work but do you know what Meher Baba’s phrase truly was? It was this:

***“Do your best. Then, don’t worry;  
be happy in My love.  
I will help you.”***

It was a spiritual word between the Master creator and the disciple. When worry finds you, maybe you can hear your Master say to you: “*Do your best. Then, don’t worry; be happy in my love. I will help you.*” It just may be enough to keep the revolution going...

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<sup>5</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor. Same Source as previous.