

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:15-20 NIV2011)

### **Don't Worry**

I remember it in my grandparents' house. It was a wooden plaque with a fish attached to it. When you would push the red button, the tail would start flapping, and you would hear about a little song he wrote that you might want to sing note for note. Then the fish head would swing out and "Big Mouth Billy Bass" would serenade you with: "Don't Worry, be happy." It's a neat little song by Bobby McFerrin; at the time we thought it pretty funny. Of course my parents needed to get one as well.

It's a nice little sentiment: Don't worry, be happy. It's a good motto for life. When things aren't going the way you want: don't worry, be happy. Not sure about how that test is going to go: don't worry, be happy. Nervous about anything: don't worry, be happy. Sounds easy enough. But I don't know about you, I'm not about to take advice from an animatronic fish no matter how catchy the tune might be. But what about if this is coming from the Bible? What about God's voice? What about his promises? Don't worry. He's got this. At times it sounds as worthwhile and real as listening to a talking fish. It sounds foolish. But it's not naïve. It's not believing a children's story to help you sleep at night. It's not living in a make-believe, pretend world. It's resting on Christ alone who is the firstborn of creation and firstborn from the dead.

Don't worry because Jesus is the image of the invisible God. When you look at Jesus, you see God. It's not an imitation. It's not a reflection. He is God. He is the firstborn of all creation. No one and nothing is greater than him. By him all things were created. He is before all things. Don't worry. And not only were all things created by him, they were created for him. Therefore, he has a vested interest. He has stake in them. So, don't worry. He is the firstborn over all creation in time and rank. As John writes, "**In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.**" Christ is there in the beginning. Christ was there

before the beginning, **“Through him all things were made.”** Therefore, he is King over all things. Christ is King over his whole creation. He is king over the universes that have been and are yet to be discovered in the heavens. He is king over your rolling Sandhills under your feet. He is king over the invisible spiritual beings, demons, and angels as well as the visible beings, creatures, and people. He is king of the great tall mountains down to the tiny molecules, atoms, and electrons. He is the king over the things you can see with your naked eye as well as the things you need a telescope to see or a microscope to make out what it is. The thrones of some distant country with their crowns or scepters, Christ outranks them all. What about the powers of the local, state, federal government? Yes, those too. How about the rulers—presidents, governors, and mayors? What about the authorities—the laws, officers, and judges? Yes, he outranks them also. As the firstborn of creation he is before them in time; he is before them in rank. And not only that, he holds them together. They all serve Christ and his purpose. They were, after all, created for him. He’s in control. Nothing happens in this world without Jesus knowing it or his approval; nothing. Not even the leaf that fell from the tree as you came to church today.

So, don’t worry, right? Saying that can sound like trying to tell a person spiraling out of control to calm down. It’s more likely to add fuel to the fire. I mean, how can you just say, “Don’t worry,” and think that’s going to help? We are full of it. We are full of worry as we think about this created world. There have been so many hurricanes that they ran out of names for them this season. Then you think about the floods, hurricane-like winds that flatten corn fields in Iowa, forest fires ravaging so many acres of land, that virus that won’t go away and this pandemic. Don’t worry, seriously? We are full of worry for our country—the racial and political tension, healthcare, economy, when to open up, what about masks, the election and fallout all-but-guaranteed to come. We worry about the society that we live in—immoral, corrupt, violent, crime, more division and discord. I recently had a conversation with someone about whether or not things are getting worse or if it’s more in our face because of media. I think the answer is, “Yes.” I mean, we try to say, “I’m not worried; just concerned.” But we all know better...

So, what’s your plan God? What are you going to do about it Jesus? If you are the firstborn of all creation, why don’t you do something King of kings? Lord of Lords? Holding all things together? Where’s this great power he keeps talking about? Where is this love? Where is your justice? Doubt and distrust quickly goes up when his power and plans are not evident. Frustration and disappointment rage in our minds. Hearts are filled with anguish as we want to debate with God and take him to task. “What’s your plan for fixing my marriage? What are you going to

do about my relationship with my parents? With my children? What's your economic policy that will get me out of this debt and be financially stable to be able to live more comfortably now while also prepared for my future? What's your healthcare plan for my loved ones and for me? Answer me and show me, and then I will confirm your appointment to the seat of firstborn of all creation with its rank. Until then, I have every right to doubt!"

Someone else tried that once upon a time. Little did Job know that when he sat there accusing and demanding a debate with God, God would answer him. Out of the storm the Lord answers: **"Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. 'Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand...Let him who accuses God answer him!'"** (Job 38:2-4, 40:2). I can't speak for you, but my conscience speaks for me. Don't worry? Obscuring God's plans with words without knowledge? That's saying: you don't know what you are talking about and making things worse. Standing in the presence of the almighty all-present God trying to tell him that he should listen to me? Don't worry? Hearing the all-powerful God tell me to brace myself like a man—you are speaking fighting words, so get ready. Get ready to be interrogated by the all-knowing God. And still don't worry? Yeah right. Unless of course the thought of his just punishment doesn't bother you. Unless the thought of death doesn't scare you. Unless the thought of never-ending suffering and pain in hell doesn't terrify you. Don't worry?

There is one who can stand in the presence of God, hear his voice, and not worry. There is one who faced the terror of death and suffering of hell and then tells you, "Don't worry." He's the one in whom God was pleased to have his fullness dwell. The one who the Holy Spirit conceives and the Virgin Mary gives birth to. The one who comes not to be served but to serve and gives up his life for many. He's the infinite God who confines himself within a woman's womb for 9 months. The one by whom all creation is made needs to be comforted, consoled, protected, diapers changed and food fed by an inexperienced mom. The one who is there when the world's foundation with the seasons and time are set in their place had to learn his own foundation to crawl before he could walk or run. The one with almighty power suffers, struggles, and wrestles with temptation. That one says, "Don't worry."

Why? Because it pleases him to reconcile us with God. Sin breaks our relationship with God. It brings us to terror to stand in God's presence. It makes us God's enemies, not trusting, always doubting, fighting Him and his plans. There was only one way to remedy this situation. Without blood there is no forgiveness. So the God-man Jesus Christ stands before rulers of the Jews and the authority of the Romans like a sheep being led to the slaughter. With the authority of his throne

Pilate interrogates the King and carries out the worst form of injustice. And still Jesus says: “Don’t worry.” For the joy set before him he faces the cross and scorns its shame. Even as Jesus hangs between heaven and earth suffering for all those sins of worry and distrust along with every sin, he does it willingly. For this is why he came to this earth. As his Father abandons and forsakes him and he cries out as he suffers the torments of hell, he doesn’t get down from that cross. Don’t worry. After the suffering comes the crown. Through the blood of the cross Jesus is making peace between God and man. The broken relationship is made whole. Don’t worry, he says: “It is finished.” And without a worry in the world while trusting God’s plan he says: “Father into your hands I commit my Spirit” and dies. But God would not let his Holy One see decay. He would not abandon his Son to the grave. His death would be short-lived. Three days later he becomes the first born from the dead. And that risen Jesus is given the name that is above every name in heaven, on earth, and under the earth that every knee shall bow and worship their King. He is the firstborn of the dead so that in everything he is supreme over all.

So don’t worry. Because it was a real body, with real blood, on a real cross, with a real person, you have real reconciliation with God. It’s not just words, but don’t worry. With Jesus’ blood pouring off that cross over your head you have been washed clean of your sins. Don’t worry. You have been washed, you have been sanctified, with the water and the Word. You have the Mediator, Jesus your go-between, who speaks to the Father on your behalf and maintains this blood-bought peace. Jesus washes your sin-stained hands with his blood and reminds God, “For the sake of my perfect life and innocent death, through my blood I shed, forgive them.” Don’t worry; God wants you to be with him. Storm God’s throne-room with confidence in prayer. He listens. He answers. Don’t worry—you have place with him. Jesus returned to heaven to get it ready for you. He’s coming back to bring you to him.

Until then, don’t worry—nothing in all creation can separate you from his love. Not a virus. Not an election result. Neither angels nor demons or the devil’s best attempts. Remember, Jesus is the first born of creation. We have a living flesh-and-blood Savior who blesses and keeps you. His loving face shines on you and gives you peace that surpasses understanding. When it feels like life is unraveling out of control, remember, he is the firstborn of creation. He is the glue that keeps things together keeping it from all chaos. Don’t worry. It’s not naïve. It’s not foolish. It’s not just pretending everything is fine when it’s not. But don’t worry—it rests on Christ’s alone firstborn of creation and firstborn from the dead. Amen.