

St Peter's, Ealing

Sunday 4th October 2015

Harvest Festival/ Trinity 18/ Feats of St Francis of Assisi

Don't worry, be happy

I wonder if you remember that catchy tune from September 1988; "Don't Worry, Be Happy" by Bobby McFerrin. Apparently it was the first top 10 hit for a song sung acappella. Popular because of its gentle reggae rhythm and the essence of a relaxed Caribbean culture. Apparently there is a very funny video that goes with it which includes top comedian of the time Robin Williams amongst others.

The title might seem to encapsulate a more laid back approach to life but apparently its inspiration comes from the work of an early 20th Century Indian mystic called Meher Baba. Born in 1894 Meher Baba travelled widely through his life both in India and abroad, he was in a serious car accident in 1955 in the USA. His work, we might say ministry, was amongst the poor, the lepers and the mentally ill. Meher Baba's philosophy was promoted as being 'don't worry, be happy'; his pictures are of a very smiley man with a large dark moustache. Sometime he is said to have used a much longer phrase to encapsulate his philosophy, "Do your best. Then, don't worry; be happy in My love. I will help you." Bobby McFerrin apparently saw a poster of Meher Baba with the phrase "Don't worry; be happy" in a friend's study and it became the inspiration for the song.

This song often comes to my mind when I read this passage from Matthew's Gospel. Jesus seems to be saying the same thing; don't worry, be happy. Don't worry about food, don't worry about clothes – God will provide. This is a tough call. What would happen to us if we did this now? Where would lunch come from? Where would I get my dinner? Winter is coming, is God going to give me a warm coat and a roof over my head?

The Key to understanding this passage comes towards the end in verses 33 and 34. First we are told to make the Kingdom of God the centre of our lives and then the reality check – because these worries will be always with you. Jesus has been watching the people around him and he has realised how worries about our material wellbeing can block out God. We can become too embroiled in our personal needs, which are important, but they push God to

the fringes. As people of faith we are called to have God at the centre of our life and that means to have God in every part of our life, every corner, every decision. And here's the thing, if we allow God that place in our lives our worrying over the transient fripperies fades away and we begin to see what is truly important.

Meher Baba work amongst the outcasts of life because he understood what was truly important in life, people. The words of Jesus aim to challenge us to understand this truth for ourselves; that in the Kingdom of God we are called to care for and serve each other.

Today our Harvest gifts are being gathered for the work of Ealing food bank. Ealing food bank feeds thousands of families every week. These are people who have to worry. They have to worry about the basics of life and where they are coming from. They have to decide whether to feed themselves and go cold, or stay warm yet be hungry. Part of our call to being part of the Kingdom of God is to feed those who need food so they can stay warm too and pay the rent. This is kingdom work because if we can help them not to have top worry perhaps they can at least be happy, and you never know, they may also be able to focus on the Kingdom of God too.