

93 MILLION MILES

Inspired by the song by Jason Mraz

Sept. 5, 2021

Rev. Richard Maraj

Lyrics to 93 Million Miles

93 million miles from the sun,
People get ready get ready,
'Cause here it comes
It's a light, a beautiful light,
Over the horizon into our eyes
Oh, my my how beautiful,

Oh my beautiful mother
She told me, "Son in life you're gonna go far,
If you do it right you'll love where you are.
Just know,
Wherever you go,
You can always come home."

240 thousand miles from the moon,
We've come a long way to belong here,
To share this view of the night,
A glorious night,
Over the horizon is another bright sky
Oh, my my how beautiful,

Oh my irrefutable father,
He told me, "Son sometimes it may seem dark,
But the absence of the light is a necessary part.
Just know,
You're never alone,
You can always come back home."

Home, home.

You can always come back

Every road is a slippery slope
There is always a hand that you can hold on to.
Looking deeper through the telescope
You can see that your home's inside of you.

Just know,
That wherever you go,
No, you're never alone,
You will always get back home

Home, home

93 million miles from the sun,
People get ready get ready,
'Cause here it comes
It's a light,

A beautiful light,
Over the horizon into our eyes.

Rev. Richard Maraj: Morning again, everyone!

So I want to start with a joke, but it's really bad ... [Congregation laughs] And you're thinking, "*Oh; what's different from normal?*" But, um ... But it has a good point to it. So here it is:

So this policeman sees this drunk guy searching for something near the streetlight. And he says to him, "*So have you lost something?*"

He said, "*Yeah; I lost my keys.*"

And so the officer gets down to help him on his knees. And after a few minutes he says, "*So, are you sure? Where exactly did you lose your keys?*"

He said, "*Oh, I lost them over at the park.*"

"*So what are you looking for them here for?*"

He said, "*Well, the light is much better out here.*" [Congregation groans and laughs]

See, I told you!

The great Indian philosopher, Krishnamurti, said this: "*In one's self lies the whole world. And if you know how to look and learn, the door is there and the key is in your hand. Nobody on earth can give you the key or the door except yourself.*"

We can be like that drunk man, and we are, in a way, in the sense that we're all searching for something. We're all looking for something. We're searching for something maybe that we lost; like, maybe we lost our joy or our passion, our sense of direction. Maybe we feel like we've lost ourselves, and we're searching. Maybe we're looking for a way to feel greater peace or happiness or success. Looking for a way to make better decisions, have healthier relationships. Maybe to prosper in greater ways or have a better life and feel a sense of meaning.

But no matter what we're searching for, the truth is that no one can give it to us but ourselves!

Whatever we are seeking, it is there! The door is there and the key is there. The Universe provides us with so much, and is waiting for us to open the door. To open our minds and to turn the keys to allow ourselves to experience the fullness of the gift of the life that we've been given.

In the Book of Romans, Chapter 15, Verse 29, the Apostle Paul says, "*When I come unto you, I will come in in the fullness of the blessing.*"

So I want you to think about your life right now. And do you feel like you are experiencing the fullness of the blessing of the gift of life that you've been given? Or are there some areas where you're not feeling as full as you would like to feel?

And today we're going to look at the song, "93 Million Miles," because I think it's such a nurturing, adorable, uplifting, feel-good song. You know, I think it really helps us realize the miracle and awe of this incredible life, and how blessed we are. And it helps us realize that we are the one that determines how full these lives that we get to live really are.

This song came out in 2012, by Jason Mraz. Written by Jason Mraz and Michael Natter and Mike Daly. Jason met Michael Natter at some of the coffee shops and little writer's workshops. Michael Natter was well into his 60s, and Jason Mraz was 35. Michael Natter's guitar was older than Jason. [Congregation laughs] All the songs he wrote were older than Jason. There was more than a 30-year difference, but they made this connection and became friends.

And so here is what, in an interview, Jason said. He said, "*I invited Michael to my house to help me change out a toilet, because I figured he would know how. He brought his guitar and, after we changed out the toilet, he played his guitar.*"

And I wondered: Why did he mention his toilet? [Congregation laughs] And he mentioned it twice! And then I figured it out; it's 'cause he wanted to show the connection and friendship that they shared.

See, I believe there are levels of friendship that we have. You know, people we just do some stuff with. And then another layer is people we invite to our house to socialize. There's the give-your-friend-a-ride-to-the-airport level of friendship. [Congregation laughs] You know, there's the call-you-in-the-middle-of-the-night friendship. And I believe high on the list of friendship is help-you-change-out-your-toilet friend. [Congregation laughs] That is a deep friendship between a man and a man! [Laughs] Just thought I'd give you my philosophy on friendship and toilets. [Congregation laughs]

So the song is actually based on something Michael Natter said while they were hanging out and playing together in the sun. And here's what he said. He said, "We look at the sun: this fiery nuclear furnace 93 million miles away. And by the time that the heat and the light get to us, it's just right!"

You know, so he was captivated and in awe by the miracle of the sun. When I heard this, I got so excited. The fact that heat and light travel so far to bless us, to support us! You know, to feel the warmth – to see – to me is an amazing thing.

You know, the sun is the center of the solar system. It is the most important source of energy that gives life on earth. It is 330,000 times larger than the earth. It represents 99.86% of the mass of the entire solar system. The temperature of the sun is 27 million degrees Fahrenheit. I mean, can you think about how amazing it is that it travels so far?!? The light and the heat, and gets to us. And it's just right ... except from May to September in Phoenix! [Congregation laughs] You know what I'm saying? I mean, for real! [Laughs along with congregation]

And hearing that, do you not just get excited and amazed at how blessed and supported we are by God and the Universe? I mean, think about just the sun, alone, which is the main source of life. But also air and rain and gravity and the stars and the ocean. All of this stuff is there for us constantly so that we can live in the fullness of the blessing.

Here's what Jason says. He says, "Ninety-three million miles from the sun is where we live; 240,000 miles from the moon: that's our geographical location within the solar system. Yet, no matter where you are, there you are. No matter where you are on this planet, you can call that home. I wanted to create a song that acknowledged that home is where the heart is. And it's up to you to decide."

So the reason we're using this song is: I love this song, and it's fabulous. But also because, on my vacation, I did not feel very connected. I felt quite out of sorts and out of sync. I was kind of sad. And just feeling a little bit lost. And not as happy or peaceful or joyful as I wanted to be. And this song – I didn't even hear it; it popped into my head and kept over and over again. Much needed to help me shift my mindset so that I could enjoy the things that were before me, and get re-centered.

And so here are the four lessons that I learned that were so helpful to me this summer. Over the last/past month.

You know, this song is written in the context of parental advice to a child on how to live life. And the line that gets hit over and over again in the song is, "You can always come back home." **YOU CAN ALWAYS COME HOME.**

You know, it says:

***"Just know
Wherever you go,
You can always come home."***

***"Just know you're never alone
You can always come back home."***

In the song, the parent – or the song – is encouraging the child to go live; go live life fully! But also remember: You can always come home. And it's really, to me, I want to connect with the feeling of being at home. The feeling of being welcomed. Of being loved, cherished and accepted and appreciated and nurtured. It is that amazing feeling of being home that's really our foundation. You know, the foundation – emotionally, physically and spiritually – that everything is okay, and we're going to be alright. That we are loved and supported.

And, to me, it's not just the idea of home: of coming back to your parents. Or you can come back to your own house. But we're home in this social system. We are at home ... We are home in this Universe. On this planet. That we are home. That we absolutely belong here. That we are a vital and crucial and important part of life. That, wherever you go, you are home. That you are valued. That your life has meaning and purpose.

And so that whole idea is that we can always come back home. Because there are times when we feel lost. We feel disconnected. We don't feel as valued and cherished. And then we can always come back to that feeling of oneness: oneness with life; oneness with all people; oneness with the sun; oneness with the Intelligence and the Source that made us and makes everything possible.

If we ever feel lost, we can just say, *"I am home."* Because wherever we are, that is the truth! *"I am home."* Half-voice; say it to yourself with me. *[With congregation]: "I am home."* Just take a deep breath into that. Expand and know you're valued. That you belong. You're an important part of life.

Again, half voice. *[With congregation]: "I am home."* Deep breath. Let it sink in more. One more time. *[With congregation]: "I am home."*

You know, that practice of hearing something and pausing to let it sink in a bit deeper actually comes from the Bible and a particular word. And the word is "selah": S – E – L – A – H. It's written 75 times in the Bible, most often in the Psalms. And let me give you an example of where and how it gets used. So it says in Psalms 4, Verse 4, it says: *"Stand in awe and not sin. Commune with your own heart, and be still. Selah."* Psalm 3, Verse 8 says: *"Salvation belongeth to the Lord; thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah."*

And "selah" means to pause, and to calmly reflect upon it. To just say, *"I am home"*: it needs selah. It needs time for you to let it deepen into your heart and into your mind. Because the deeper it is, we begin to, not just hear it in our head, but we need to feel it in our heart: to embody, to radiate, to be and express the truth that, *"I am home."* That I belong. That I am connected. My life has meaning and purpose and value wherever I go and whatever I do. I am home.

One more time! *[With congregation]: "I am home."*

You know, when I was flying back to Canada, I thought to myself, *"I'm flying home."* When I was flying back to Phoenix, I thought, *"I'm flying back home."* *[Congregation laughs]* When I was sitting on the airplane – and I love being on airplanes! – I thought, *"I am home."* It's been two years since I've been on a plane! Having an, *"I am home!"*

The idea of *"I am home"* includes feeling comfortable in your own skin. Knowing that you are a child of God. Connecting with your true nature and spirit, and feeling that oneness. That is what it means to be home! I am home! And, yes, we will lose that connection from time to time; we get distracted by life and the challenges. And we can always come back home! It is a powerful and peaceful and beautiful and spiritual way to live: from this place of knowing that, *"I am home. Selah."*

One more time! *[With congregation]: "I am home."*

The second thing from this song is -- that it teaches – is to **LOVE YOUR LIFE AND LOVE WHERE YOU ARE.**

Here's what it says:

"Oh my beautiful mother

***She told me, 'Son in life you're gonna go far,
If you do it right you'll love where you are.'"***

So on a scale of 1 to 10, how much are you loving your life? How much are you loving yourself? How much are you loving being you? How much are you loving your friends and your family? How much are you loving your home? How much are you loving your car? How much are you loving Phoenix? How much are you loving where you are right now in your life?

And notice it says, *"If you do it right, you'll love where you are."* Well, sometimes we don't always do it right. One of the things we don't do as well is: Sometimes we spend more time worrying about our lives than actually living them and loving them. We spend more time, sometimes, complaining, hating, judging, resenting and resisting.

And we've got, like, a whole list of complaints when we get excited! We can get into all kinds of things. Complain about our bodies and our bosses. Complain about our cars and our scars. Our blouses and our houses. *[Congregation laughs]* Our relatives and our finances. I mean, we've got a whole list of things! And that doesn't help us love our life! Do you know how important and powerful it is to love your life? Could you imagine loving all aspects of your life?

Another thing we do that isn't really helpful: Do you ever wish that your life was different? Ever wish you had someone else's life? Or you wish some issue or problem or struggling in your life was just gone and disappeared? You ever wish you could just trade someone in your life for someone else? *[Laughs along with congregation]*

Another thing we do is: Sometimes we get into this thing where, *"I have to ..."* Do you ever say, *"Well, I have to do this; I have to do that."* This "have to" mentality makes life feel like a burden! *"I have to go to work." "I have to go see my family." "I have to go to the gym." "I have to eat a healthier diet." "I have to lose 20 pounds." "I have to fix that faucet." "I have to, have to, have to!!!! *[Congregation laughs]**

So I ask you: What would it take for you to love your life? And to love where you are? Here are three things.

Number one is to move from "have to" to "get to." You get to go to work! We get to go to the gym. We get to eat healthier! And we get to have a conversation with a loved one.

The second one is to give thanks for everything that's in your life. God made you! The only life you can live is the life you have! So give thanks! Give thanks for our smile and our bodies and our talents. Give thanks for all the things in our lives.

And the third one is: enjoy your life. I mean, what's holding us back from just enjoying all the good stuff that's in our lives?

The third thing is to **WALK THROUGH THE DARKNESS.**

Here's what it says:

***"Oh my irrefutable father,
He told me, 'Son sometimes it may seem dark,
But the absence of the light is a necessary part.'"***

I think we've all had times in our lives where it felt like it was so dark we couldn't see a positive outcome. We couldn't see how things could possibly work out. Sometimes we can't see, you know, where things will end up. And sometimes in that dark place, we feel hopeless. We feel lost. We feel hurt and helpless.

But all of that dark stuff is a necessary and important part of life. Jesus said, *"In this life there will be trials and tribulations."* There are going to be some dark moments. But he said, *"But be of good cheer; for I have overcome the world."* Be of good cheer, because these things that are in our lives; we can not only overcome them, but we can gain from them. I really believe it's the tough times – the challenging

times; the struggles; the walking through those moments of darkness – is the thing that really makes us stronger, makes us wiser. I think it makes us more understanding, more compassionate. And I think more appreciative of our lives. I would go as far to say that it is because of the difficult things we go through that we are who we are. And for all the things that we've achieved; we would not have done it without the difficult stuff in our lives.

The dark is a necessary and important part of our lives. So it's important not to run away from it, or hide or pretend. It's important to stand firm. To face it, to deal with it. And get better from it.

You know, every time we avoid and run away from difficult problem – pretend it's not there – we are cheating of the blessing and the goodness that it meant to bring into our lives. That's why the Apostle Paul said, *"Count it all joy, brethren, when you face trials of any kind."* Because it will test your faith. *"And let perseverance have its full work in you so that you are whole, complete and lacking in nothing."*

Whatever we are facing in our lives right now, or a difficult time, is to help us feel more whole, complete and lacking in nothing. And bringing out the very best in us that sometimes only adversity brings out! So it's important that we don't be dissuaded or depressed by the difficulties, but to use those things to enrich, enhance and uplift us.

One of my favorite quotes from the great Rev. Jack Graf is, *"Don't despair! Even the sun has a sinking feeling every day."* [Congregation laughs] *"But the next day it still rises!"* It still rises.

And the final thing – lesson – is to **HOLD HANDS AND STICK TOGETHER.**

It says:

***"Every road is a slippery slope
There is always a hand that you can hold on to."***

You know, I really believe that the "slippery slopes" and the challenging times – in those times is the most important time to hold on to someone's hand, and to stick together and to be there for one another. I mean, that's such an important thing. I mean, it's always easy to hang out when we're all "lovey dovey" and it's all good. But it's how we stay together in the difficult and challenging times.

When Jesus said, *"When two or more are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them."* It means that, when we come together, we multiply and magnify the power of Spirit and our faith and our love and that connection. I believe that hanging together during tough times creates a deeper bond that brings us closer, and expresses a greater level of love.

You know, the interesting thing is that they say if you take a stick, and you break it, it takes about eight pounds of pressure to break it. But if you take two of those sticks, it takes 32 pounds of pressure to break it. That, when we stick together, we are four times stronger, and can withhold and help and support one another.

I want you to think of a difficult time you went through. And who were the people who were there for you? Who are the individuals whose hands you held through those difficult times? And then I want you to think of that thing again, and imagine if they weren't there! Imagine what it would have been like having to go through that journey not having someone there for you to support and be with?

I truly believe that the difficulties we face in life would be infinitely more challenging if we didn't have someone there to be with us. To help us through it, to support us, and just being present in those times. That is why we're here! Jesus said, *"The greatest commandment is to love one another."* To love and to support and to encourage and believe in, and just even to just be present to someone. What a difference it makes!

And whether it's a friend, a family member or a co-worker or a friend, or a sponsor or a support group or a therapist, we are here for one another. We're not all meant to do it by ourselves! We're actually meant to do it with the support and love of one another. And if you're feeling alone, reach out to

someone. Ask. Because that is what makes life fulfilling. That is what makes life meaningful. I believe that life gets better when we stick together. It is absolutely the truth: in good times and not so good times, and particular in the not so good times!

So I flew back to Canada to see and be together with my family. As you know, I'm one of 10 kids, and we all kind of get together in August. And, you know, my oldest brother's got pancreatic cancer. And so it was a kind of bittersweet visit, if you want to know the truth. My brother's still in chemo so, of the 16 days I was there, there were few days that he was really up to having company. But it was still beautiful to see his face and his smile. It was still inspiring to see him just trying to hang in there and be available and playful for all of us. He actually cooked four times for us [*congregation gasps*], which took a lot out of him! He cooked Chinese food and curry and soups and salad. I had no idea he was such a good cook! I thought we shared a love of food, but just the eating part of it! [*Congregation laughs*] The guy was fantastic!

And so it was really touching. And I have to admit, there was a cloud of sadness, wondering if that might be the last time we get to interact and be together. But it was still precious, even though many of us had heavy hearts. It was still a beautiful thing to be together and to be present with each other.

Another thing that was cool about going and visiting was that, I haven't been there for two years, and in that period three little babies – nieces and nephews – were born! [*Photos show of babies and congregation reacts: "Awwwww."*] And that was so adorable. Aren't they cute as heck! [*Congregation laughs*] And so that's Riya, Savannah and Bodhi. [*Congregation applauds*] And I was kissing and squeezing and loving them all!

And that little Bodhi one, when I left, he's got an uncle named Rashad. And I'm Richard. And they always call me Uncle Rich. And he said to his mom, after I left ... He says, [*imitating child*]: "Uncle Rish? Uncle Rish?" And his mom is saying, "Maybe he's saying Rash. Or Rashad." And she said, "You mean Rashad or Rich?" And he said, "Rish! Rish!" [*Congregation laughs*] And so it sounds ridiculous, but to have a two-year-old say your name and remember you after you left just absolutely touched and filled me!

So when I got back, goal number one was get a car. I hate car shopping. I hate all of that kind of thing. So I had a friend who went with me. I went to six different dealerships over the course of several days. Spent hours there. And it was just so nice to have someone there. I had three other friends texting me deals on cars and comparing and telling me, giving me advice. And I have to say, it sounds silly, but it just felt so good to have people helping me do something I really don't like.

And then the other thing that happened this week is: I really needed my toilet changed out. [*Congregation laughs*] For real! And here's the amazing thing! I had two friends who don't know each other volunteer to change out my toilet! [*Congregation laughs*] And I will tell you: I felt so loved at that level of connection and friendship! It was done yesterday; for real! [*Congregation laughs*]

And so it is amazing what happens when we feel connected. When we're there for one another. Life gets better when you stick together. So whatever you're going through, who's someone's hand you need to hold? And who might need to hold your hand right now? Because sometimes not even saying a word, but just being there for one another – and believing and helping one another – it does an amazing thing. That's where the depth of fulfillment in life really comes is how we are there with one another and for one another ... in all times, but particularly the difficult times. There's a deeper bond of love that created and affirmed just by being there for one another.

Last line I want to focus on, it says:

***"Looking deeper through the telescope
You can see that your home's inside of you."***

When Jesus said, *“The kingdom of God is within you,”* you know, it was really saying that the key to living as full a life as you want is in your hands! The door is right there, just waiting for you to open it, to unlock it, and to allow yourself to live in the fullness of the blessing that has been given to all of us.

And those steps, again, are: to know that you’re home. To know, *“I am home.”* Because it really is the truth. And to love your life. To love your life! You get to; you don’t have to, you get to! Appreciate everything in your life, and let yourself enjoy it. The third is: walk through the darkness. The difficult times are there to teach us, to bless us, to help us. Don’t run from it; face it! You’ve got everything in you to deal with it, and it will bring out even greater things from you. And, finally, hold on to the loved ones. Hold on to the hands, and stick together. Because life is better when we stick together.

So the next time you feel the sun – the light of the sun – on your face and warming your cheek, I want you to remember how amazingly blessed you are. God loves you so much – has provided so many things. And even a far away as 93 million miles!

God bless you all!

[Congregation applauds]

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