

Christ Came To Fulfill The Law

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[0 : 00] Now, if you will turn to Matthew chapter 5, page 4 in the New Testament section of your blue pew Bible, and then turn to verse 17.

If you pray quietly to yourself as we read, that God may take this very familiar passage and open up to it things that we have never known.

Now, Matthew chapter 5 and verse 17, Jesus, continuing the Sermon on the Mount, says, Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets.

I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

[1 : 26] For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

So you have that very familiar passage. And this is an introduction to a longer passage which deals with the things about the Sermon on the Mount, which most of us have trouble with.

Like it is said, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you. Again, it is said, you shall not swear falsely.

But I say to you. Again, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you. So Christ picks up the law and shows how it is to be fulfilled.

Now, my big problem as the rector of this great parish on this great Sunday morning in this great province and all the other things by which we could compile the happy circumstances of all among which and among whom we are called to live.

[2 : 43] My great tension, which makes this job exciting. Let me put it that way. Is this. That on the one hand, there are those who are Anglicans.

Who were born Anglicans. Who were baptized Anglicans. Who went to an Anglican Sunday school. People for whom stained glass windows and candles and red carpets and processions and priests and all the paraphernalia of our Anglican worship are as familiar to us as can possibly be.

It's there. And all of it is of great importance to us. And nothing do we want to lose of that great heritage. Particularly the material dimensions of it which have become so important to us.

Which nevertheless are important. There's those people in this congregation. Then there are others whose keenness for the word of God makes them feel that what on earth are we sending clergy dressed in long robes up in front of us for?

Because we know what the New Testament says about those dressed in long robes who say long prayer. And why are we having processions? And why do we have ceremonies and rituals?

[4 : 11] And why do we have liturgy? And why don't we just get down to what is essential in the faith? And not go through all that palaver and all that nonsense. Really get down to what's fundamentally and significant and important.

So that's the happy position of the rector of St. John's to explain one group of people to the other. And to hope that they will come to some happy conclusion.

Well, fortunately I don't have to do it. But this text does do it. And I want you to look at it carefully with that in mind. And there is one word in this text by which I think you need to interpret the whole of it.

And that word is the word appearing as it does in verse 17 when Christ says, I have come to fulfill the law.

You see, because the old Orthodox Jews, when they heard this new young rabbi come with all his radical teaching, they were afraid that all they had learned, all they had rehearsed, all they had memorized, all the ceremony and the ritual of their lives was suddenly going to be taken away from them by this person.

[5 : 37] All those things which they held to be sacred and important was suddenly going to be ripped away from them and something new was going to happen.

And then, of course, the Christ comes along and he says to them, no, I'm not going to do that. I'm going to do something else. Because they were used to people who taught the law.

They were used to people who counted all the precepts that were in the law. They were used to people who, in a sense, tried to obey the law.

They were used to all that. But Christ said, I've come for another purpose altogether. I have come not to abolish, but to fulfill.

Now, basically, that's what it means. If you have all the outward trappings of Anglicanism and have never found the fulfillment that comes in Christ, then those things are worthless.

[6 : 43] And anybody can see that. They have no value apart from the fulfillment which Christ brings to them. In the same way that the Jews held on to the promises and held on to the law and they went on with this promise generation after generation and they observed the religious customs and rituals that had developed around these promises.

But they were never fulfilled. And Christ said, I've come to fulfill all that is demanded in the law. I've come to fulfill all that was promised in the law.

I've come to put that all away. I've come to fulfill it. Now, if you look at your life, you will find that not only in the New Testament is this word fulfillment very important, but it's important in your life too.

Some of you carry on your faces the awareness which you cannot hide, that the life which you had hoped for, like the little boy hoped for the pony, the life that you would hope for, has never been fulfilled.

The recognition which you long for has never found the fulfillment. In your marriage, perhaps you have never found the fulfillment that you've sought.

[8 : 09] In your job, you have never found the fulfillment that you wanted. So a lot of people tend to regard religion as holding on to promises which will never be fulfilled, but that you're better for holding on to them than for not holding on to them.

And a lot of us are incensed by people who, to use the analogy of the little boy, throw away the shank and the pony halter and say, no more, I'm not going to play around with that any longer. And they say to us in the Anglican Church, I've had enough of the ritual and the ceremony and the procession. Those all speak of fulfillment and I want the fulfillment.

I don't want those without it. Now when the fulfillment comes, all that will be enormously enhanced. But without the fulfillment, all it can do is turn to ashes and to bitterness and to disappointment.

In the same way that all the promises and all the laws and all the sacrificial ritual of the Old Testament, unless at some point in history there came a moment of fulfillment, all that would have been totally in vain and meaningless.

[9 : 30] And that's why it's such a startling fact that Christ says, I haven't come to abolish all this.

I have come to fulfill it. And to those who are impatient with the church and with the ritual and with the ceremony and all those things, let me tell you that in the purposes of God, all they provide is a structure within which you can discover the richness of the fulfillment which Christ brings.

And if you don't have that kind of structure in your life, then you won't experience the extent of that fulfillment. And it's the purpose of God that you should experience that fulfillment.

And that's why Jesus is making in all too familiar words, I regret, because familiar words so often hide from us the reality that we really want to discover.

But it's in those familiar words when Christ says, I have not come to abolish the law and the prophets, I have come to fulfill them. Then he makes two or three illustrations to heighten the significance of what he said.

[11 : 00] He said, as long as the earth and the heavens remain, and on a lovely morning like this you could hope they will remain quite a while, but as long as that remains, so will the promises of the law and the prophets remain.

Nothing will be taken away. so as long as the earth and the sea and the sky and the mountains remain, so will the promises of God remain.

And so with those promises has come in the midst of our creation the fulfillment of them in the person of Jesus Christ. Then he illustrates it further by saying there's two kinds of creatures and he said the kind of creature that stands up and tries to help you find loopholes in the law is not very satisfactory.

In other words, he tries to loosen it and say, well, that's what it says but that's not what it means. Jesus says that's what it says and that's what it means. And for someone to stand up and say, well, no, no, no, no, no, don't pay any attention to that.

Do pay the closest attention to it because in every jot and pittle, every iota and jot is going to find fulfillment.

[12 : 31] So look at it with expectancy and hold on to the whole of it because the whole of it finds its fulfillment in Christ. Then he goes on to say that there is another kind of teacher, the one who both does the law and teaches it and he's the one who is great in the kingdom of heaven.

The one who declares to you that the whole of what God has promised he will fulfill. Then this last and tremendous verse when you think about it in terms of a whole revolution of our understanding of religion when he says I tell you unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

And so what he's saying is that in the fulfillment of the law something way more than you ever imagined something way more than the Pharisees and scribes have ever dreamed of will happen. And the people of God will not be marked by that pharisaical righteousness which is illustrated to us so often in the New Testament but something far greater than that.

That's not the epitome of religion. Something infinitely more than that. And it comes with the fulfillment of the law in Christ. That belongs to you.

[14 : 06] Now there's one condition that I want you to be very much aware of when Christ says I have come to fulfill. Because this word fulfill is not a New Testament word which contemporary psychologists might take out and say what you need my friend is fulfillment and if you're not getting it look somewhere else.

You can't take it out of the New Testament in that way and say all I need is fulfillment because fulfillment in the New Testament always refers to the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. Fulfillment of what God has promised. It's not a case of you having some happy dreams for which you seek fulfillment.

It's not the matter of you having some unreal idealism to which you cling in the hope of fulfillment. No, that's not it. What he's telling them is grasp hold of what the law and the prophets say.

Grasp hold of the promises that God has made and those are the things which Jesus Christ has come to fulfill. That's where fulfillment is to be found.

[15 : 33] The fulfillment of what God has promised. Which, when you do examine it, when you do subject your mind to it, you will find it infinitely greater.

It's of a dimension beyond anything that your little mind could grasp concerning the potential of your future. The promises of God are infinitely more than that.

And it's the fulfillment of that that Christ has come to bring. So what do we have now? We have the law and we have the promises.

We have the prophets and their visions. We have Jesus saying, I haven't come to a different way. I have come to the fulfillment.

To what? Without this. And I stumble when I try and explain it to people.

[16 : 47] I stumble when I try to grasp the significance for myself. But what is being said by Christ when he says, I haven't come to abolish, but I come to the kingdom.

That somehow all the demands of the law are to be fulfilled in Christ. Somehow all the promises of God are to be fulfilled in Christ.

Somehow all the longings of the human heart are to be fulfilled in Christ. So I can't do any more than tell you that.

That's what it says. If you want to argue, argue with us right there in Matthew 5, 17. If you want to protest against the way God runs his universe, protest against that.

But there is the point. And all I can say is that Christ said, I haven't come to abolish, I've come to fulfill.

[18 : 05] Somehow all the promises of God are fulfilled in Christ. Christ said, in a very personal and safe to you and me, I'm going to me, I'll do the faith which are heavy-laced that I will betray.

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. For I have been made lowly, you will find rest for your soul.

All the paraphernalia of Anglicanism doesn't mean anything unless it finds fulfillment in Christ. Then it only means a tiny bit of all that there is.

It's only just a glimpse of all the glory that belongs to Christ. Christ. So, I want you to argue with it. I want you to fight with it if you want. But I want you to recognize that we're not without fulfillment. Life is not meant to be frustration founded by frustration founded by frustration.

[19 : 30] It's meant to be the fulfillment of the promises of God in our lives as the people of God through the person of Jesus Christ.

Who is named I invite you to God who is your whole faith. we're going to sing hymn number 240 that your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

but well that I what was I a one that I did and I did do for among huge humans you know how music is likecons foods like as Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[22 : 15] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[24 : 45] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.