

From the Pastor

At Matthew 5:17, Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.” Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets. What does this mean?

Let’s start with the prophets. What would it mean for Jesus to fulfill the prophets? The books of the prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, etc.—are full of dire warnings but they are also full of wonderful promises. One such promise especially comes to my mind, the vision found in Isaiah 25:6-10. In this passage, there is pictured a great feast “for all people”. And God will destroy the shroud and the sheet that is cast and spread over all peoples and nations. God will swallow up death forever. And “the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth.” It is a promise. The day will come. It is a promise that Jesus came to fulfill. Indeed, you can find the words of Isaiah 25 echoed in the vision of a new heaven and a new earth in chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation. That day will come.

But what about the law? What does it mean that Jesus came to fulfill the law? We usually think of the law as a list of requirements. How are the commandments fulfilled? By obeying them, of course. But why did God give us the Ten Commandments, this list of requirements? Just so we would have something to do? No. If you think about these commandments, they are good. If we follow them and obey them, then life will be good, or at least better than if we didn’t. Life would be good not only for us, but also for those with whom we live.

Life would be good if we knew that God, and God alone, is worthy of our highest love; anything less will fail us. And things would be good if we could all take a day off and rest. Things would be good if we do not take the life of another, if we did not wreck our families or the families of others by committing adultery, if we did not wish we had people’s stuff, if we didn’t take other people’s stuff from them, and if we did not tell lies about other people. Life would be good for us and our neighbors.

I think there is a promise in the law. Life will be good. It will be a good day, that day when we all know that God, and God alone, is worthy of our highest love. It will be a good day. And we wouldn’t even think of wrecking our families or taking peoples stuff, the things they need. Wouldn’t even think of doing that. And neither would we even want to tell lies about others. And it would never enter anyone’s mind to take the life of someone else. There is a promise within law.

It is the promise of the law that Jesus came to fulfill, the promise of the law and of the prophets. The day will come when the promise of the law and of the prophets is fulfilled. That day will come. This is our hope, the hope that God has given to us in Jesus Christ. And we will not be disappointed (Romans 5:5).

Pastor Neal