

“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose.” Matthew 5:17 NLT

lectio *Matthew 5:17-20*

I have learned a ton through this last season of Advent from 2020, plus, I am learning even more going into this year’s Easter season in 2021. It’s from this little phrase, “to fulfill.” Much of Jesus’ discussions and actions are centered around the fact that his coming as a baby and his life, death and resurrection are all fulfillments of what God had promised under the Old Covenant. It is fascinating to read Jesus’ words and see those little asterisk footnotes. “This fulfilled what the prophets had said,” or “for this is what the prophet wrote.” Then you can go to the old ancient books and read what had been promised hundreds of years earlier. So, even in Jesus telling the crowd that day, he is fulfilling what was promised even as he speaks. Or, a good friend Michael Foss says, “He is fulfilling prophecy even as he lives his life.” Jesus’ words and behaviors were done in such a way as to make every single promise or prophecy about the messiah come true - thus fulfilling and accomplishing their purpose right before the first century eyes of all who followed him. In complete innocence and perfection his life was a GIGANTIC object lesson about how God rescues and restores humans! The law could not save anyone, and it was never meant to do so. It’s one thing to say “I have never received a ticket for a traffic violation in my life.” It’s a completely different story to say “I’ve never received a ticket, however I am going to personally pay for every traffic violation (no matter the seriousness or cost) of every single driver who has EVER driven - past, present or future.” Can you imagine standing in front of a judge and saying, “Yes, I’m guilty, but there’s a guy that paid my fine.” The judge looks at you, looks at the law that says the fine was paid and satisfied and says, “you’re free to go.” If you say, that’s crazy! What prevents someone from going out and racking up thousands of traffic violations and just getting off Scot-free? Hmm, isn’t that kinda what’s been going on the whole time? Someone else has paid for our stupidity, stubbornness and sin and we continue to blow him off. You see the laws concerning drivers in vehicles was never intended to produce perfect, error free traffic. It was to “save” us (as much as possible) by restraining or restricting our desires to drive any way, anywhere or any time we want to drive - thus putting everyone in constant danger. The law was prevention, the penalty was punitive (teaching us by making us pay, locking us up or taking away our privileges completely). Jesus NEVER broke the law, any of them! And, yet he paid the penalty for all of us who do so every single day of our human existence!

Dad,
That thought, that I am the lawbreaker and that Jesus never broke a single law (God or man’s?) is super hard to wrap my brain around. And, what’s harder, is that I continue to break the law (sin) both yours and man’s and think little about who pays for that. Not just the penalty (the cost) but also the punitive (so that I think twice before doing it again). This is shocking to me! And it’s even more shocking to know that you have picked up the penalty tab for those who belligerently take advantage of your grace to continue to hurt themselves and others.