

Immerse Day 48 :: April 7

As I read today, and frankly for the last week or two, all I keep thinking about is Jesus. Specifically, His statement from Matt. 5:17-20.

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

These laws we read are from the Old Testament, which everyone knows is, well, old. But to have Jesus Himself justify them gets a bit more tricky. Sure, it's still 2000 years ago, but while we teach and teach and preach and preach that Jesus was about grace, not Law, it is hard to hear this from Him.

Just in this reading alone, let alone from the rest of Leviticus, there is so much death. Do this, you die! Don't do that, you die! Most people who stand against capital punishment do so on religious grounds – Jesus wouldn't want that person to die. He would seek to redeem them. And then Matthew 5.

So what did He mean? How does Jesus fulfill these laws about unclean priests, and extreme sexual purity, and clean foods?

We have to ask why the laws were given. What would it take to “fulfill” the laws, and more importantly The Law. God gave the Law to help people live holy lives. We've talked before about the fact that this is an infant nation, and so it needs strict laws with strict punishments. Because we know humankind – if the punishment is not strong enough, we'll go do it anyway, even if it kills us. But the purpose of the Law is not selfish manipulation or absolute control or powerhunger. The purpose of the law is holiness. And when Jesus comes, He brings holiness with Him. In fact, we cannot live holy lives without Him. We cannot follow the Law perfectly, and so the only complete holiness we can have is Jesus' holiness given to us in return for our sin. He took our sin and died with it. We take His holiness and... what? That's a question for another day, but the fact is that we take His holiness, and the Law is fulfilled.

So does that mean we don't have to live holy lives? By no means! When we take Jesus' holiness upon ourselves, we do not then cease to have holiness or live holy lives. When we jump in a lake, we don't therefore cease to get wet. When we take Jesus' holiness upon ourselves, we become fully holy, and so the law is fulfilled, and so we can live lives more righteous even than the Pharisees.

So as we read these laws, always let them lead you to Jesus, to His holiness given to us, and then live out that holiness in every aspect of your life.