

Reflection for Wednesday June 10

Collect for Trinity

Almighty and everlasting God,
you have given to us your servants
grace by the confession of a true faith
to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity,
and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity:
keep us steadfast in this faith,
and evermore defend us from all adversities,
for you live and reign,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 5:17-19

Jesus said, ¹⁷Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Reflection;

Jesus' emphasis on the law is about doing good. Immediately prior to the verses we have heard today he is speaking about the worthlessness of salt that has lost its saltiness, or of a light that is lit but is hidden under a bushel. He is speaking about things needing to be authentic, true to their purpose.

Jesus speaks about the law in the same way. He doesn't want to abolish the law; in fact he says that it will not pass away until heaven and earth pass away. But he has come to fulfill it. Jesus is exploring the meaning of the law for his contemporary reality.

The Greek verb *kataluo*, to abolish, means to tear something apart. It is the opposite of the Greek word *oikodomeo*, to build up. In Matthew's Gospel, the verb *to abolish*, is commonly used in reference to the temple (cf. Matthew 24:2; 26:61; 27:40). Jesus exclaims about the temple, "Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down" (24:2). The Common English Bible is even more descriptive: "Everything will be demolished."

Jesus says that this is not his intention with respect to the Law. It is not to be abolished. But on the other hand, he does not say he has come to build up the law. Instead, Jesus says he has come to fulfill the law. The Greek verb translated as *fulfill*, means to complete. He is not bringing the law to an end but completing it by re-interpreting it. An example of this is when Jesus says, *You have heard it said ... But I tell you* (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 33-34, 38-48)

Jesus chooses to fulfill the law by interpreting its meaning in the light of God's love. This makes the law alive, relevant as a life-giving communication from a loving God, rather than it being a rigid set of rules to be followed. God's nature doesn't change so the law can't be made to mean anything that anyone wants it to mean; that would be to abolish the law. But the law must be fulfilled through the contemporary practice of love.

This is the ongoing task to which we are called; to do and to teach God's love in our time and place.

The Lord be with you.