

Engage360 | Episode 19: The Good News of Christmas

Introduction: Welcome to Engage360, Denver Seminary's Podcast. Join us as we explore the redemptive power of the gospel and the life-changing truth of Scripture at work in our culture today.

Dr. Don Payne: Welcome again to Engage360. I'm your host, Don Payne. And I want to say Merry Christmas to you from everybody here at Denver Seminary. From our board, our faculty, our staff, and everybody who makes this happen, our production team particularly. But we wish that, we wish and hope and pray that you, and yours will enjoy the Lord's blessing, the Lord's favor, and the Lord's encouragement, this entire holiday season, but particularly this week of Christmas when we culminate Advent with a celebration of the first coming of our Lord. We're really grateful this week to have back as our guest, our President, Dr. Mark Young, who is going to give us a Christmas reflection. We'll take a brief hiatus this week from our normal interview schedule to hear from Dr. Young on Christmas. So Mark, welcome back to the podcast and it's all yours.

Dr. Mark Young: Thanks Don. What a privilege to be able to share some thoughts here this week of Christmas. Let me just begin by saying, I love Christmas. I love everything about Christmas. I'm one of those that enjoys the trees and the food and the events, and particularly those peppermint mocha lattes that you.

Dr. Don Payne: Nothing better.

Dr. Mark Young: Nothing better than that at Christmas. So I'm obviously someone who appreciates the opportunity we have to stop what we're doing in our regular routines, set aside time for special relationships, special memories, special conversation, special events, and just revel in that. Just enjoy that. We're called to be people of joy, aren't we? I want to talk a little bit about good news. When the angels appeared to the shepherds in the field outside Bethlehem, they said to the shepherds, don't be afraid. I bring you good news, that will cause great joy for all people, all the people. And I got to thinking about what kind of good news would bring great joy for all people. I can't even imagine what kind of news that would be. You know, the truth is whatever we might do that's good as human beings, it's almost always the case, if not always the case, that it's good for some that may be not so good for others. So for example, if someone came out and said, we have identified a way to cure all forms of cancer, that'd be really good news, right? That is if you had access to medical care or if you had the money to pay for it. So it's really good news, but it isn't good news for all people.

The truth is, as human beings, we're incapable of doing something that is purely and wholly good for everyone. There's always a mixture somehow. Good news for some, not so good news for others. But the angels said it pretty clearly.

Don't be afraid, I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all people. That statement, good news that will bring you great joy for all people is the language of the gospel. That phrase, good news, is the word that's often translated gospel as we move into the New Testament. And it seems to me that when we think about the birth of Christ and ultimately his coming as Messiah, as the one who would fulfill all that Israel had hoped for, the truth is all that humanity hoped for. His coming, that is good news because it solves problems that no human being has ever been able to solve. The good news that will bring great joy to all people, all people, is the news that there is a solution to that which no human has ever been able to solve. Those three challenges would be sin, death, and evil.

So, when Jesus comes, the angel announces that something is happening that has never happened ever in the history of humanity that will resolve what every human being on the face of the earth has struggled with, sin, death, and evil. That's really good news. That's the proclamation, the joy that finally God has stepped into our plight in a final way, in a decisive way that will resolve what none of us has been able to resolve. From that proclamation of good news the angels go on to say, today in the town of David, a savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. Those two titles that the angels use there the Messiah and the Lord are very intentional and very, very loaded. They're weighted with this meaning that extends far beyond what has ever been wrapped up in any human being's life. Messiah, that long hoped for one who would step into Israel's plight and finally, finally bring what they wanted, the redemption, the coming together of all their hopes and desires in this one who will make everything right and everything whole and everything beautiful.

And then the Lord, that's also a loaded term. It's loaded because Caesar Augustus and other Caesars took that term, that title for themselves. They claim to be the Lord, the one with authority to rule over the earth. And so when these angels say, don't be afraid, I'm bringing you good news, that's going to cause great joy for all people. And then he says that this person who's coming is the Messiah and he's the Lord. He's saying that this person who's coming, the one who's being born has an authority and a mission and a power to do what no other human being has ever done. No other Jewish leader. Even those false Messiahs, no other Roman leader has ever been able to do what this person, this one who's coming will be able to do because he's going to destroy sin and death and evil, and that's why the angels call him a Savior.

Someone who's going to bring them out, those who are struggling with sin and death and evil, deliver them from the tyranny of that which no one else could ever deliver them. That's really good news. That's good news in a way that no one could possibly imagine anyone could do. So it makes perfect sense to me, Don, that this is a week where we exalt and celebrate and rejoice in something that causes us to see anew, that when Jesus came, he brought good news that will cause great joy for all people. That's what I'm going to hang on to this week, and I pray that you will as well as you celebrate together with your family, the coming of the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Don Payne:

Mark, thanks. And again from everybody here at Denver Seminary, Merry Christmas.