

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: Hey friends, welcome again to *Engage360* from Denver Seminary. We're glad you're with us. My name is Don Payne. I'm your host, and we're honored to have with us again, Dr. Mark Young, our president for a sort of part three conversation about how we move forward after elections. Now here in the US we're looking at possibly the most electrified and contested election season we've ever known at least in our lifetimes. And we're airing this interview, this conversation, during the US National Election Week. Now those of you in other countries, listening to us will still find plenty that is transferable to your own political situations. And if you're listening to us in the States, you may be listening to this either before or after the elections take place this week. And we intend it to apply either way. So Mark, welcome back to the podcast.

Dr. Mark Young: Thanks Don. That's a great place. At some point, we need to talk about something other than politics. Can we just find something else that we can really enjoy together.

Dr. Don Payne: I think we've got enough common ground. We can do that. And we need to lighten this a little bit. You're right. So, you know, political elections tend to be a zero sum game. There are only winners and losers. Everyone does not get a ribbon, no consolation prizes. There are no silver or bronze metals. So first, how does that tend to affect us individually, nationally, and, and even as a church?

Dr. Mark Young: Thanks for asking that. It's a really important question. Right? So zero sum game, somebody wins. Somebody loses winners and losers. In essence, when you're engaged in the political process, your goal is to win and to win at the expense of others, right? If you win, they lose. It's interesting to me that we are called as Christians to lose for the sake of others. In other words, the posture of the Christian life is to set aside my rights for the sake of others, for the sake of the good of others. So this idea of being involved passionately in winning an election, even though I might deceive myself into thinking that it's actually for the good of others, but to give myself wholeheartedly to that and in the process then, stop seeking the good of others, legitimately and really the people that I interact with is opposite to what we're called to be. So we're never called to a zero sum game. Jesus accomplished all in that great act on the cross, that great act of sacrifice and loss. And that's why we're called to him.

Dr. Don Payne: So for followers of Jesus, I mean, when we vote for people, we still want them to win. Right? But for followers of Jesus, what should it look like when our candidates of choice win and when our candidates of choice lose?

Dr. Mark Young: So the question is, as we go into that voting booth, which is essentially one of the most selfish acts we perform in our lives, is that good that we're seeking really just our good, or is it a vision of the common good? So when I pull that lever, am I seeking the good of the unborn child? Am I seeking the good of the

immigrant at the border? Am I seeking the good of those who have no access to healthcare or very little access to poor healthcare? So what is the good that I'm seeking when I pull that lever while I know you don't pull levers anymore?

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. When I go to the post office.

Dr. Mark Young: When I fill in the square, I do whatever I do when I vote. I think what happens because of the way we execute our elections, we generate so much anger, so much fear, so much emotion related to the voting process. That it's very difficult for us, even as believers to walk into that voting booth and not just be thinking, I got to protect myself, I got to get what's good for me and my family. I've got to do what is best in my own affairs, rather than asking what's best for the most, in the way that I'm going to vote. So, you know, essentially when we say our goal is to sacrifice for others, good. It may mean that. For example, I might vote for a candidate who would raise my taxes, which I may not want to do. Who does? Nobody does. Right. But I believe that by being willing then to pay more taxes, I might be able to provide adequate healthcare for the poor, or I might be able to provide better education for those whose schools are underfunded and lagging behind. So that's what I mean by what does it look like in the booth? It means that I'm willing to seek others good above my own good as I vote

Dr. Don Payne: Probably a fairly radical thought for many, even to think beyond the parameters of our own perceived good and be aware that there, there maybe a greater good that is at cross purposes with my immediate good. That's a pretty counterintuitive notion?

Dr. Mark Young: No question. And that's why the kingdom of which we are a part is not of this world. It's counterintuitive to all our values to be willing, to sacrifice for the good of others, but yet that's what we're consistently called too. Isn't it? That's what sets us apart. And so, you know, if you were to ask me, go back to that winners and losers motif right here, we are a couple of weeks before the election. And I can tell you right now who the who's going to lose that election, or maybe I'll say it another way, I can tell you right now who the loser is in that election. And the answer is evangelicalism. We are the biggest losers because we have sacrificed our privileged position to make our identity grounded in the gospel that seeks the good of all. And we have chosen to participate in a way that has alienated a large percentage of the population from the very message that we live for.

Dr. Don Payne: So give us some bearings, if you will, on you know, your overall thinking about how do we move forward from this point, once the election is over and the dust is settled, if it ever in fact settles, how do we move forward?

Dr. Mark Young: Great question, you know, go back to the, the winner, take all the win, lose proposition of an election, the way we have participated, then will determine how others perceive us coming out. The other side of that election. And it could well be that if the candidate that we voted for loses, people may gloat. People may in fact, revile us as they already do, or people may, what's the right phrase,

rub our noses in it, which I think probably is less noble than we think it is. So what do we do? How do we respond? When we see those whom we have campaigned against or spoken against glorying in the victory that they've won counterintuitive. We love them. We reach toward them. We listen to them. We reflect on why it is. They were so committed to those, to the candidates that we weren't committed to. And by God's grace, we build relationships with them.

Dr. Don Payne: Do you mean that? I can't put on my bumper, that sticker that says don't blame me. I didn't vote for, you know, fill in the blank. If it doesn't go, if it doesn't go my way, I can't buy that bumper sticker?

Dr. Mark Young: No. It's so interesting. By the way, one of your vehicles doesn't have a bumper, at least on the back, as I recall.

Dr. Don Payne: This would be true. Yeah.

Dr. Mark Young: We'll on from that. This is why it's everything about the Christian life is counterintuitive. You know, when Jesus goes to the cross and he's reviled First Peter 2, Peter is very clear. He does not answer a word, but kept entrusting himself to the father. Now here's a moment where clearly with the power of an omnipotent God and a sovereign God, everyone who had done him wrong could have been eliminated. He just allowed them to continue to do what they were doing to him, trusting in the father, along the way he went out of his way to enter into the lives of people who spoke against him. Sometimes very pointedly at other times, very compassionately. And so it seems to me that our willingness to step toward those with whom we disagree, not just to convince, not just to point out everything that's wrong, but our willingness to step toward them in genuine acts of love. And for the purpose of learning, separates us from everyone else, who's participating in the political process, but that's who we're called to be.

So, what am I, what should we do after the election? I think more than anything else, we need to look around us and say, what did I learn? What do I know about those who voted differently than I, or campaigned for a candidate that I didn't candidate for? What can I do to show them the love of Christ? So I think we have some relationships to mend, and here's what I think is most critical. We have relationships to mend within the body of Christ. I mean, we're not just talking about what is our ultimate goal, which is to reach into the lives of people outside of faith so that we can point them to Jesus, but I'm talking about people of equal faith. People, meaning people who believe in the same savior we do, we have alienated some of them. And now is the opportunity for us to say, what bridges do we have to rebuild or build for the first time in order for us to be the people of God.

Dr. Don Payne: You're making me think about the theological motif. We called common grace. And I'm wondering how our theology of God's common grace for all can give us a gospel work around for some of these polarities that continue to get us stuck, society at and large and believers, as part of that society. Because when

politicians talk about bipartisanship, but then of course rarely do it, how does the gospel help us think about that? Common good and human flourishing, regardless of who is in office? I mean, that's basically what the prophet Jeremiah told God's people exiled in Babylon, Jeremiah 29:7, to settle in and seek the good of that city, a city, which very clearly was under God's condemnation in many other ways.

Dr. Mark Young:

Yeah. And full of Babylonians, or Chaldeans depending on how you want to describe them. So full of people who did not know or worship, or perhaps even reviled the one true God, the God of the people who Jeremiah is speaking to. I think that one of the questions we have to ask when we're engaged publicly, we want to know, what did I do for the common good? Go back and say, what does God want for this person? So what does God want for the person at our border who's desperate to leave a violent situation because their family has been threatened or some of their family members have already been killed? What does God want for that person or that mother who wants to raise their children in a place of peace and security? And the possibility of an education and the possibility of making it to age 15, and the possibility of healthcare, what does God want for them? What does God want for that person who for whatever reason has turned their back on him, he wants them to come back to him and find the fullness of life in him. So if we're asking the question, what does God want for this person or that person or another person, then we are seeing what is the common good?

Dr. Don Payne:

Well, that's a very different kind of question. And it does show the power of the questions we default to ask in any kind of political or other arena of life. That question we tend to ask first, that default question really puts on display the values that we bring from our deepest, from the deepest recesses of who we are. And that's a very different question. If we're asking questions, questions that may be important in some regard, but questions having to do with the economy or security or, and I'm not critiquing any of those questions per se, but those are questions that if they are our first question, display our deepest values.

Dr. Mark Young:

No question. So think about it. No question about your question. Think about this. It, the common good is deep, personal. It's an impersonal, right? It's a concept out there. So what I have to do in order to live my life in accordance with this idea of seeking the common, it's personalized, the common good. What's the common good for the folks who live on the North side of our house. And what's the common good for the man at the corner, with the sign saying he needs money to be able to eat that day. What's the common good for that person. So if I personalize it, then I'm willing to go ask. I'm willing to have a conversation I'm willing to enter into their lives. So I think what often happens, you know, in the political arena, we talk about groups of people. We depersonalize them. So now it's just those liberals or those right wingers or whatever language we want to use, which really gives us permission emotionally not to get to know them. So if you were to say, what am I going to, what we, what do I want to do? And what are we going to do after this election?

What I want to do is step closer into the lives of people who vote differently than me, who support different candidates than I did, who have a different understanding of the moral and ethical issues that were brought up. And let me just say one other thing, if I could here, I think this is a great opportunity for us as believers to just ask some really hard questions about what you brought up earlier, what matters most to me. And by that, I would argue what identity matters the most for me. And don't just say, well, Christian or child of God right off the bat, just ask yourself this question. If you were to look at the way I live, if someone were to look at the way I live, what would they say matters most to me? And as we ask those deep and hard questions in community with others who are willing to answer those questions, I think we have an opportunity to learn from what we've experienced during these past few months. I believe if we're willing to do the hard work, God could use the reflection that we could do on this last few months, our engagement in politics to make us a different church.

Dr. Don Payne:

That's about the most hopeful thing I've heard recently and hope if we can get hope out of the realm of generic abstractions, hope in a very particular concrete sense is really, really what we need. I want you to interact with an idea or an image that I picked up recently. I was listening to another podcast in a very astute observer, a student in my estimation made the comment that he increasingly finds himself as a follower of Jesus to be politically homeless. And I really resonated with that while at the same time, thinking that leaves me in a sort of negative disconnected space. How do you think, I know I'm asking you to think on the fly about this, but with that metaphor, what might it look like for us to move from, or accept political homelessness and be compelled by a different type of political home?

Dr. Mark Young:

Yeah, that's a good question. I actually, I would expand it and go beyond political homelessness and argue that as believers, we're called to a posture of hopelessness in this world, I think first and foremost of First Peter 2, again, starting here, I think in verse 11, where Peter describes us as he did already in the earlier parts of the book, as those living in exile, foreigners, people living outside their passport, people living outside their Homeland. In fact, I did a series of lectures years ago on the abundant life or mission as the abundant life. And one of the characteristics of the abundant life I would argue is homelessness. It is that ability to say that my first loyalty, my first point of identity, the values and laws, if we want to use that for the church that guides my way forward in my relationships and what I do is not associated, right? It's not associated with any earthly government or kingdom. Now that doesn't mean that we're to go out and break the laws of the kingdoms that we live in.

Clearly Paul advises against that, but it does mean that if our priorities and values are in contradiction with the laws of the land or the values, really more than the laws of the place where we live, or the parties that we're forced to choose in terms of a buy a camera or a buy party two-party system I'm always homeless. I'm never going to find a space because my, my citizenship is in a kingdom that isn't of this world. Again, not meaning, not present in this world,

but not operating by the values of this world. And I think it's also, we miss this often in that phrase, Jesus says, my kingdom is not of this world. If it were, then my followers would do something to get me out of here, right? They would use the tactics of politics or violence or whatever, but that's not the kingdom of the Lord, Jesus Christ. So we're always going to be homeless. We're always going to be an outsider, not just to a party, but to the very culture we're living in, wherever we find ourselves.

Dr. Don Payne: So I'm thinking that this, all, all of these phenomena we've been discussing over probably three podcasts now, spanning some months are really pointing us to a deeper or a firmer grasp, a deeper dive into the gospel. We may have some things to learn about the gospel that we did not even know we needed to learn from being, from having our hand forced in these ways. And so to stay with that image of homelessness, political homelessness what I hear you saying or implying is that that's a good thing.

Dr. Mark Young: It's a very good thing. And I would, again, I'd expand it and say, it's political homelessness, it's national homelessness, it's cultural homelessness, because the value system by which we live and for which we would die is a value system. That is a kingdom, not of this world. So when you think about the Christ event, that's a phrase that Leslie Newbigin uses, the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the Ascension. What sets off that Christ event? According to Paul in Philippians 2, it's this willingness to humble, Jesus' willingness to humble himself, to not grasp or hold on to that which is rightfully his, but to humiliate himself and to go to death, even death on a cross. So if that's what creates the Christ event, so to speak, both in the incarnation, the crucifixion, then what flows in and out of that Christ event are those same postures, that same attitude, that willingness for us to sacrifice for the sake of others. This is not the message we want. Right? So there are times when I wish I could believe a prosperity preacher.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah.

Dr. Mark Young: Right? There are times when I wish that I could just ask God for whatever I think I want, regardless of whether it's in line with what the kingdom's values are, and God would give it to me.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. There are many times I wish God were my genie, I don't really want God. I want a genie.

Dr. Mark Young: Like that heavenly vendor of blessings. Right? Yeah. But that's not what we're called to Don. And that's why engagement in the political process for us, according to the standards of partisanship or according to the standards of voting out of anger or fear, or self-interest are not who we're called to be. I would say, I want to, I know how many times, or how many other ways to say this, but yet it is exactly the message. So as we come out of this season, right, as we enter into now life after the election, no matter who wins, we're called to the same thing. That's why we have to step toward those who voted differently

than us and sacrificially say, I want to know you so that I can love you better. Can you imagine saying that to someone who voted differently than you? I can imagine saying it, but, but imagining doing it is something that's more difficult, but yeah. That's what we're called to.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. That may be, and we'll wrap it up with that. That is the gospel call for all of us. That is the gospel call.

Dr. Mark Young: Absolutely. You know, people say, what are you going to do the day after the election?

Dr. Don Payne: Probably take a bath.

Dr. Mark Young: You know, I've got to get up and read Scripture like I do every day. But I've got to take some time and ask, who are those folks whom I know voted differently than I did, and we'll make a list of them. And then I'm going to call them up or zoom or whatever else we can do to have a conversation these days. And just say, tell me about how you experienced the election. Tell me why you were so passionate about the candidate you voted for.

Dr. Don Payne: Okay. I want to capture that and make that our sign-off challenge to all of our listeners the day after the election, if you're in the US the day after our elections, when, if you're international somewhere else, the day after your elections, whenever they take place and however, they take place, do that. Make a list of people who, you know, or think voted very differently from you and reach out to them and ask them, what does all of this mean to you? Get to know them and love them. That's the challenge. Okay, Mark. Next time you and I talk, we're going to commit to having a fun lighthearted, maybe utterly superficial conversation. And I'll ask, you know, inane podcast host questions, we'll just have a great time.

Dr. Mark Young: Yeah. Thanks for asking the way that leading this conversation the way you did it.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. Well, thanks for all of your insights and thanks to all of you. Once again, for taking a little bit of time to be with us, we value the time that you spend with us. And we hope that you'll periodically visit our website. If you don't already have reason to do that, I might draw your attention to a number of resources we have available for free, throughout the year. These are unrelated to our normal curriculum or degree programs, but we have webinars and several free online courses. They're not for credit courses, but three online courses. So please check our website, Denverseminary.edu, and you'll find some resources that will really encourage you in a lot of different ways. We would love be in touch with you, if you have questions about any of that. So on behalf of our entire production team and administration, this is Engage360. I'm Don Payne. Our President, Dr. Mark Young is here with us, and we hope to talk to you again next week. Take care.