



Joanna Meyer:

You're listening to the Faith & Work Podcast, where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor, and society through our daily work.

Hi and welcome to the Faith & Work Podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, Denver Institute's Director of Public Engagement and founder of Women, Work, & Calling and today, I'm joined by Brian Gray, our VP of Formation and director of the 5280 Fellowship. Hi, Brian.

Brian Gray:

How are you?

Joanna Meyer:

It has been a few months since our listeners heard your voice on the podcast, so give us an update on what you've been up to.

Brian Gray:

Yeah, this is here right at the beginning of the summer as we record this and we have just finished our sixth class of the 5280 Fellowship, which is a nine-month experience in spiritual formation, professional development, civic engagement, and biblical-theological foundations for working professionals to just integrate faith in their career life.

So we got to finish up with a final retreat in mid-May up in the mountains, which was glorious. And here at Denver Institute we also have an initiative we call CityGate, which is a national-facing initiative to just create shared learning, friendship, and best practices amongst other practitioners in work of vocational discipleship like us around the country.

So we got to be up in, just last week we were up in Boulder and had 30 leaders from 25 different cities' organizations were involved together just to be together, to talk about what we're seeing, what we anticipate coming in the future of our work, and just to enjoy one another and have good coffee and good meals. It was a real, real joy.

Joanna Meyer:

It was fun. Really, really fun. So recently, we have been focusing episodes of the podcast on the work of practitioners, people like Dave Hataj, who runs a gear manufacturing company, or Tracy Beal who serves local schools. And our goal is to offer insight from people who are immersed industries and organizations that make our communities run but every so often, it's helpful to take a step back and take a broader look at the forces that are shaping culture, the church, and our approach to public life as people of faith.



Today, our conversation with our guest ended up being so rich that we split the interview into two episodes. So you'll have a chance to hear from Brandon Washington in part one today and in two weeks, we'll hear from Brandon again in part two.

Today we're joined by pastor and author Brandon Washington, a longtime friend whose book *A Burning House: Redeeming American Evangelicalism by Examining Its History, Mission, and Message* recently debuted at number one in the Christian Church History and Christian Ethics categories on Amazon. Brandon pastors Embassy Christian Bible Church, a multi-ethnic congregation in central Denver, and has been a faithful friend and conversation partner on themes related to faith, race, and justice.

If you spend any time with Brandon, you know how deeply committed he is to the work of the church, specifically the evangelical movement, and as a black man, how uncomfortable that commitment can be. So today we'll consider what it means to be faithful when you don't feel at home in your faith community. And Brian, you and Brandon have been friends since your days together at Denver Seminary. Tell us a little bit about what his work has meant to you.

Brian Gray:

I got to know Brandon, he was a student at Denver Seminary, I was faculty, it was a mentored spiritual formation and leadership development program. And I think it was the second meeting that we had I asked Brandon, I tried to do this as [inaudible 00:03:48] as possible, but I asked Brandon if he would be a mentor to me, a person that I could ask really important conversations about matters of justice and particularly racial inequity. I had a good friend when I lived in Austin who I got to have these types of conversations for and it was so important for me to listen and learn and I caught wind right out of the gate that Brandon was deeply committed to his faith, incredibly thoughtful and intelligence, and I felt like it was a safe risk to take, so I asked Brandon to be my mentor. And then I found out how much I enjoy him and then we kind of hatched plans and we've done some leadership development gatherings for some of our 5280 fellows in the area since then. So it's been a good friendship ever since.

Joanna Meyer:

I love that. Why do you think Brandon's voice and perspective is so valuable in this cultural moment?

Brian Gray:

We worship a Messiah who was full of grace and truth, and most people find themselves in one camp or the other. And Brandon is going to be truthful, and that is important and necessary and I love that. And the diplomacy and the clear-eyed graciousness with which he does that actually invites you to want more of that truth. So Brandon, at risk of saying you're like Jesus, I think I just did it. Maybe not full of grace and truth, but representing grace and truth in conversations like this.



Brandon Washington:

You and my wife, you and my wife could discuss that and she could help you on that a little bit.

Brian Gray:

Yeah, I bet you she's going to get one side or the other, huh?

Joanna Meyer:

Well, Brandon, let's not wait any longer, please welcome Brandon Washington to the podcast. I would love to know about Embassy Christian Bible Church. What led you to plant it?

Brandon Washington:

You know, that's a good question. So there's two stories there that they fork, in very recent past they forked. So we planted the Embassy Church in 2012 and we chose the northeast part of Denver, the neighborhood that is referred to as Five Points. Historically it was Five Points, Whittier Coal, Clayton and northern parts of the City Park community. We chose that neighborhood because at the time, it was under heavy gentrification. And the gentrification diversified the neighborhood. The neighborhood was historically African American in fact, Five Points was often labeled, was often dubbed the Harlem of the West. So in the middle of the 20th century, if you want to hear certain jazz musicians, if you want to get certain food, Five Points is the neighborhood in Denver to which you would go.

And the gentrification diversified that neighborhood. And we observed that there was what we called a Cold War going on in northeast Denver because you had African Americans who lived in the community for generations and you had the influx of, and I want to be careful because this was not just a racial distinction, but it was also a socioeconomic one, but you had an influx of the gentry, who were the up-and-coming financially and socially climbing young, marrieds and singles who were moving into the community.

And as a missionary to this community, I would find myself having conversations with both camps. And the African American community would struggle with this influx. And so the consistent arguments I would get from both sides, and I was often the mediator, is if among the entering gentry, they would say, we cannot wait until this element, these people, who have been here for a while, we cannot wait until they're gone because as they leave, our property value increases. Brian and I had a very frank conversation about that because we had a meeting at a coffee shop on the corner of 27th and Welton, that intersection is five streets that converge and the neighborhood is named after that intersection, that's why they called the neighborhood Five Points. And that there was an element that looked forward to what the community would be once the long-standing populace was gone.



And then I would speak to people of color, black people specifically, and the neighborhood was black historically because of redlining. So black people could not qualify for home loans outside of northeast Denver and then later, the line was expanded across Colorado Boulevard into a neighborhood called Park Hill. And so if you wondered where black people lived in Denver, it was in the northeast community part of the city and in Park Hill. And if you wanted to know where the black high schools were, Manual High School, the black middle school was Cole Middle School. In fact, it's Cole Arts and Science Academy now but no one who lived here for a while calls it that, they still call it Cole Middle School.

And that was where they could live because of the limitations of redlining. And the response, my neighbor told me this, she says, "They would allow us to live nowhere else. So we moved here and we made this the place to be. And now," referring to gentrification, she said "they're coming and they're taking it from us." So a friend of mine, a dear friend of mine, a man who stood with me at my wedding, he's a graduate of Dallas Seminary, Brian, but we love him anyway.

Brian Gray:

That's right.

Brandon Washington:

He moved to Denver in 2011. We prepared to plant the Embassy Church in northeast Denver. And we were missionaries to that community for a decade. And then about a year and a half ago, a man whom the two of you probably know, Pastor John Moreland, who is now on, he's now part of the staff, part of the faculty at Denver Seminary, he was transitioning out of his role as the senior pastor of Denver Christian Bible Church and he came to me and asked if I would consider stepping into the lead pastor role there. And my answer to him was no, in fact it was no repeatedly. And he would ask every few months for about two years, three years.

And then he said, "I'm not asking you to leave Embassy. I'm asking if we can bring the two churches together." So we brought the two bodies together. Embassy at that point was predominantly, to use the language of the day, was predominantly white. It was about 65 to 70% white and Denver Christian Bible Church was predominantly black, more than 90% black. And we were bringing a predominantly white congregation into a marriage with a predominantly black congregation. And we spent 18 months slowly walking to that wedding day. And the wedding day was January 1 of 2023. And the Embassy Church married Denver Christian Bible Church so now we are Embassy Christian Bible Church.

And the mission has not changed. We look like the message that we've been trying to preach for a decade. And we're more centrally located, so we make an impact not just in northeast Denver, but we are able to reach in four different directions. And one of the distinctives is we want to identify Christ as supreme in all things. And if that is true, then any racialized idols have to be confronted by a comprehensive, and it's a shame I have to use that qualifying word, but a comprehensive in contrast to a



truncated gospel message. The gospel does not merely unify us vertically from humanity to God, it unifies us, it reconciles us horizontally among human beings.

Brian Gray:

Can you expand on that? Can you expand on that specifically? Because this is a unique element, both a philosophy of ministry and your practical theology, frankly, which is combining in the gospel of message of both ethnic diversity and integration. And so what do you mean by that and what's that actually look like, lived reality in congregational life?

Brandon Washington:

I love it. Okay, so the orthodoxy behind that was ignited while I was in seminary. Dr. Bloomberg, and I often blame him for any growth I've had around New Testament issues. Dr. Bloomberg required we read a book by Scot McKnight entitled *The King Jesus Gospel*. And I love this because it wasn't a textbook, he didn't quiz us on it. He did ask a question on the final exam that required we answer it, well, we haven't proven that we've read that book.

But when I read that book, I had to stop because I was distracted from the assignment when I came to grips with the reality that I've been preaching a partial gospel and incomplete gospel. My fixation was on the doctrine of justification. Jesus died to deliver us from the consequence, the penalty of our sin, and he's reserved a place for us in heaven where we'll be reconciled to him in eternity. And the complication that comes with that is it teaches people who are dealing with hell on earth, it teaches them they have to wait until he comes back.

But in that message that I received from Scot McKnight, I realized that that's a truncation of the message. And I end up coming to grips with the reality of the gospel is relevant not just in eternity but in time. But you have to preach the comprehensive message. And that's confirmed by pastors like Ephesians chapter two, one through 10, God reconciled us to himself and the same gospel that reconciled us to God in verses one through 10 reconciles us to another. Verses four and verses 13 of Ephesians 2 are referring to the same sacrifice, but the parties involved in the reconciliation are not exactly the same. It's the same effort with two different results. I love it. And that became a eye-opening experience for me.

Now that becomes, that moves from my orthodoxy. How do you make that real? To your question, Brian, how do you make that real in the world? The church should look like the gospel we preach. It should look like the gospel we preach. And I don't mean merely diversity. Because it's possible for you to have a diverse gathering, but it occurs at the expense of the lesser cultures, the minoritized cultures in that church. I'm referring to an integrated body where we're all doing life together and everyone's cultural identity is put on display and it's valued.



So that affects how we approach our liturgy on Sunday morning. It affects the song choices from the platform. It definitely approaches the sermons that are preached. It affects how we handle who's in leadership. Does the leadership reflect the people we want here? Are people who come here able to see qualified leaders who look like them? That's a much more enticing invitation to them. It also looks like eternity. It looks like Revelation chapters five and seven. Every nation, every tribe, every tongue, gathered together under the one king. Are we going to do that perfectly? Absolutely not. The that occurs when he gets back, but we're supposed to be making steps toward that now.

Brian Gray:

Just as a parallel, and I've learned this from you, to be frank. I've learned a few things from you, but this was one of them. If I was to describe, Brandon and I both live in the Denver metro area as we just talked about. If I describe the ethnic diversity of the Denver Metro area, I'd say roughly 5% black, roughly 5%. These are very round numbers, roughly 5% Asian, probably 5% inter-ethnic, interracial, 25 to 30% Hispanic and maybe about 60% anglo or white. I just described diversity, I didn't tell you anything about integration.

Brandon Washington:

That is good. That's a sound point.

Brian Gray:

There is not integration between these populations in different neighborhoods. They can be pocketed, there can be subcultures at play, but that's the diversity. So I think that integration, which is do we do common life? Do we actually do life together? And it's that mutual learning from and submission to one another is a very different question than diversity.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Hi, I'm Jeff Hoffmeyer, Vice President of Advancement here at Denver Institute for Faith & Work and I'd like to invite you to become a part of our new monthly partner community. Whether it's a monthly commitment of \$25, \$50, or any amount, your generosity will support Denver Institute's ongoing efforts to help men and women love God, their neighbors, and society through their daily work, including this podcast. To say thank you as a monthly partner, you'll receive a welcome box., You'll have exclusive access to private digital content, personalized vocational coaching, and discounts for Denver Institute content and experiences. To become a monthly partner, simply visit denverinstitute.org/give or see the show notes in today's episode. Thank you in advance for your generosity.



Joanna Meyer:

So in the opening pages of your book, you present a reality that many black faith leaders face, the idea that you're theologically aligned with evangelicalism, but feel alienated by the church's response to social issues, especially ones around race. And I just want to read a quote for our readers because it's so beautifully written. You said, "I've concluded I am an inconvenient guest in American evangelicalism's idyllic house. I believe the gospel compulsorily confronts our eternal condition and the world's palpable brokenness, a message I'd long believed was shared. I was wrong. I'm a guest in the house that I'd previously deemed the family dwelling." Would you elaborate on that a little bit for listeners that may have never heard a pastor say something like that before?

Brandon Washington:

Yeah. So experiences are formative. Experiences give you [inaudible 00:18:27], and I'm often frustrated by the tendency to downplay the value and gravity of experience as a shaper of interpretive lenses. We often miss this. And the experience that occurred prior to that realization was the death of Trayvon Martin. I looked at Trayvon Martin as a boy with whom I can identify and it probably helps that I have a son who at the time of Trayvon's death was about four or five years old. In fact, I have a strong-willed, opinionated son. And the conversation my wife and I had was, it's cute when he's five, but what happens when he is 16, 17 years old? And if he takes after his father, he's 6'1" and he just doesn't look like the adorable little boy who asks questions of someone who does not feel compelled to answer his questions.

I identified with Trayvon's parents, I mourned Trayvon's death as someone who was proximate and he's close to me. And when I had conversations with fellow believers, a group of people whom I would identify as my white eternal siblings, their perception of Trayvon's death troubled me. They either found a way to blame the boy. Keep in mind he was walking home with tea and candy in his hand and his agenda was to get home, not to cause a problem. The store owner said, "He's here regularly, he created no problems." And the one who killed him was told by a 911 operator do not follow him. He disregarded that order, followed him, it resulted in a confrontation and the boy's now dead. He's now gone. A beautiful boy died.

And we tried to figure out ways we could blame the boy. It came down to, should he be wearing a hoodie? I think that's ridiculous. That's a ridiculous thing. It was raining, it was chilly outside. He wore a hoodie. Even if he did something ridiculous and immature himself, he's 17 years old, he's free to do something that a 17-year-old boy would do. And it resulted in his death. That's the first problem I had.

The second question that came up after that was, what does the gospel... Because my question was, what does it look like for the gospel to come to bear on moments like this? And the question I received was, what does the gospel have anything to do with Trayvon Martin's death? So first we tried to blame



him, and then we did not categorize it as a gospel matter. And I would have conversations with people, frankly, with whom I'd gone to seminary and their perception of that was entirely different from mine.

But when I've talked to my friends who are evangelical theologically, they're orthodox Christian believers, their perception of it was how do we address this with the gospel we preach? And I saw this line that divided us. And I realized that while we share... If you allow me to be this guy for just a moment. While we share orthodoxy, we have common ideas regarding God, we do not share orthopraxy. The application of those ideas is not exactly the same. So if you are black and a believer, you are, whether you realize it or not, you are a descendant, you are the progeny of the civil rights movement and the civil rights movement was a Christian act. The SCLC is a Christian movement. Is not an accident that nearly every leader whom we can name in that movement was a pastor.

Everyone talks about Reverend Martin Luther King preaching in Washington. He was in a pulpit in Atlanta well before he made it to Washington. And their ideas were Christian ideas. They were theologically crafted. But black people saw that theology as relevant to the broken circumstances that they find themselves in the world. And the premier social issue was the racial divide in America.

And when you're on the downside of that racial divide, the gospel's relevance is obvious. When you are on either the upside or you are oblivious to that divide, you do not see it as a gospel matter. And I thought that we could look at the Trayvon scenario and then later the George Floyd scenario and we could say this is a gospel issue. How do we bring the gospel to bear on this? When I said that aloud, the response fascinated me. Because I realized, we have the same ideas, but we do not weigh their relevance to the fallen world in precisely the same way.

I did notice that we do have, American evangelicalism does have ethical high horses. We do have ethical pet peeves. So if we're going to talk about abortion, we got to apply the gospel to that. Oh, let's talk about that one. And if we're going to talk about marriage, God knows that we have to confront that. In fact, the perversion of marriage is the downfall of all things Christian in America. We have to bring that to bear. And the same pastors who would stand in pulpits and wield their Bibles against abortion and marriage, by the way, applying theology with which I agree. I probably would not use the same isolated and unduly combative language to take the same posture, and I would season that truth with grace, which is a point that Brian was making earlier, I heard him say that earlier, while I agree with their stance on that.

Those same pastors would take a stand against bringing that gospel to bear on the American racial rift. And I realized we have the same theology, we have the same theological notions, but we do not see their relevance to the fallen world in the same way. And in that moment, I came to grips with the reality that I'm a guest in a house where I thought I was an occupant, I thought I was a resident.



Brian Gray:

Brandon, we see this and you're bringing to light really important aspects of how this works out in ethnic injustice. And yet we could take a similar view of right to life based on an imago dei and while that might get applied to abortion, it is not applied to immigration, it is not applied to euthanasia, it's not applied to the death penalty, it's not applied to gun control. Now I'm not going to stump and give you my position on all of those and therefore get a hot take from a lot of listeners. The point is that it's interesting that it's selectively in one and not broadly across the full span of a life. And I feel like this is a different way that that same idea is expressed.

And I want to ask you, I want to follow up a question really specifically because you've talked about evangelicalism and what we'd love for listeners to think about for a moment is what is their relationship to evangelicalism? Whether they identify historically, whether they identify present tense, whether they're just hearing all of the problems that might be going on in terms of the subculture of evangelicalism, let's define this a bit. It's my suspicion, Brandon, that a lot of people are deconstructing from evangelical subculture who might actually agree with much of evangelical theology. So big statement like that, help us define what evangelical is and what it's not. Just walk us through some of the key tenets that you've outlined in *A Burning House*.

Brandon Washington:

Okay, so we have to be careful in how we use the term. One of the things I committed to was you spend the first, the book is broken up into four parts and there's three chapters in each of the four parts. And you have to spend the first part of the book, the first section of the book outlining your terms and your method, the way you're going to approach it in the last three sections of the book.

And one thing that helped me do that is a good friend of mine, he asked me, "Who's your audience?" And I said there are two audiences. One of them is the audience who believes that that American evangelicalism is healthy as it is and they're oblivious to the rift. And I want to give them some perspective on how this is becoming a yawning chasm and contributing to some racial complexities and it actually contributes to a mass exodus that's happening right in front of us. We're somewhat complicit in that exodus.

The other group is there are those who would identify themselves as ex-evangelicals, a term that I did not become familiar with until I was doing the research in preparation for this book. They used to be believers, I'm sorry, they used to be evangelicals, they maintained their orthodoxy. They're still committed believers, but they've disassociated from the term evangelicals.

Now, full disclosure, I'm an advocate of the word evangel, evangelical, evangelism, of these words, evangelical movement. I'm an advocate because, I mean the crux of that is the good news. I think you



learn this in the first semester of Greek in seminary. I think we had the same Greek professor, Brian, and she pounded into our heads, you're muted right now, I'm missing some good stuff.

Brian Gray:

I said we had the same professor, but you probably got better grades. But I at least remembered euangelion, one or two things stuck in there, my man.

Brandon Washington:

This is not a flex, but Greek is one of those classes that I took to very well. I did surprising... I expected to survive Greek and I did very well in Greek. First day of class, first day of the first semester, professor told us that you should never depend on the etymology of a term. So she's not a fan of what she calls concordance preaching. Used to open it up and Strong's Concordance says this word means this. And she said it's not always that simple. And she says avoid that. Avoid deferring to the simple etymology of a term.

So I want to be careful that I do not do that here. But I would argue... And her argument was, by the way, that you can't do that because a word's meaning may change or nuance over time. I would argue that euangelion has not changed much over time. It's still a reference to good news, which means if we're evangelical, then we are the people. Brian, you are a man, Joanna, you are a woman of the good news. And if we're a church, we are an institution of the good news. We're an institution of the gospel.

And because of that, I am an advocate of that word. I want to redeem it instead of letting it go. I believe that, to your point, I believe that what has happened is people are running away from the Americanized partisan tribal redefinition of evangelical. They're not running away from evangelical theology itself. And if that is true, then the redemption of the word is a viable thing. You have to reclaim the word and carefully define what it is.

Brian Gray:

Can I say preach?

Brandon Washington:

I will as well.

Brian Gray:

Preach.



Joanna Meyer:

Amen. Amen. You need a little congregational noise here.

Brandon Washington:

You'd be welcome on the front row at ECBC, just letting you know. Embassy Christian Bible Church will welcome you. But because that's a moment that where I would, that's one of the moments where if I had notes, then they would be irrelevant and we had to go extemporaneous and we would have a time of celebration.

I had to very carefully define what the term means because in America it has become politically partisan. It has become tribalized. And my favorite description, I would not call this a definition, I'm very careful to not call it a definition, but David Bevington was the one who caught my attention. And he identified evangelicalism as a movement committed to the Bible, the centrality of scripture's revelation, and the crucifixion of Christ, the centrality of Christ's sacrifice for our redemption, the need for conversions, the need for conversions for those who are fallen. And the one that gets overlooked a lot and even redefined is the need for activism. Activism as a central tenet.

And I love that he gave us examples so there can be no confusion. He cited William Wilberforce's opposition to slavery in England. He cited the activity of the Salvation Army toward the needs of the poor, the acts of charity. He's not saying activism as an act of evangelism. In fact, it's the reason he has conversion and activism on the same list, because from his perspective, they're not the same thing. They're not the same thing. So he's identifying conversion as something necessary regarding our eternal destiny and he's identifying activism as something necessary regarding our temporal wholeness. And the gospel is what empowers both. And evangelicalism has selectively redefined activism so that we can avoid some of the temporal relevance of the gospel.

Now, I'm going to stop here because I'm running on too long and that's my tendency because it's a soapbox, but I would argue that the evangelicalism did that because if evangelicalism as a movement... I'll use the word 'we' here because I am an evangelical. If evangelicalism as a movement accepted the call to be activist, then we could not be complacent during the civil rights era. We could not be complacent during sexism in the church. Not merely that we were not helping along, but we were actively opposing the racism and the sexism that was occurring in the church historically. And not only did we not oppose it, but some of the most prominent evangelical, I use the word evangelical there in quotes because I would argue it's not actually evangelicalism, it's Christian nationalism or fundamentalism, not only did they not oppose it, but they were voices that were contrary to racial and gender wholeness.

In the middle of the 20th century, the term was being co-opted by fundamentalists who were segregationists who would use the Bible to justify the segregation. And they were sexists and they would



use the Bible to legitimize the sexism. God told us this is what it is. But a well-regarded, is this a place where we say names? I don't know. Do we? I said the name in the book.

Brian Gray:

You're okay. It's already published.

Brandon Washington:

Okay. Jerry Falwell Sr. took an active stand on a Sunday morning from the pulpit in response to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 because that was technically supposed to eliminate segregation. It didn't. He got his way, it didn't. But he took offense and his argument was, had the justices honored what God said and abided by something God put in place because God created this divide among the races and because God did that, then the justices should have honored what God did, then they would never have made that decision in 1954.

And the thing that I walk away with is, not only did he defend racism, but he stamped it with God's name. I can completely understand why people would walk away from a movement where segregation is stamped with God's name. It amazes me that the black church even exists, that black evangelicalism even exists because it came to its height during an era when segregation and the oppression of black people was marked as a thing that glorifies and pleases Christ. We have to oppose that and reclaim the term because it's been misappropriated.

Joanna Meyer:

So we'll pause the conversation here because of the length and the nuance of our discussion with Brandon. But before we move on, Brian, I'd like to hear from you to hear your reflections. Brandon challenges us to expand our understanding of the gospel and I'm saying that in quotation marks. And at times, I've heard people respond to that by saying, "Oh, that's the social gospel." How would you frame this broadened view of the gospel from a theologically orthodox perspective?

Brian Gray:

Well, I'd say first exactly as Brandon did. But the way that this might be more familiar to those who have listened to the Faith & Work podcast for a while, or if you're kind of paying attention to some of the issues that are important in this kind of integration, one of the things that we'll talk about is that the gospel has to be more than individual conversionism. So at minimum, the gospel is going to be an individual being saved by grace through faith such that they're forgiven for their sin and they spend eternity with Christ.



So at minimum, this is going to be included in orthodox understanding of the gospel, but it has to be far much more than that to be orthodox. So the gospel includes concepts like the redemption of all things. And so a number of places we can read about this. As we typically talk about that in our type of work and we talk about all things, we mean that there's room in the mission and understanding of Jesus as he interpreted his own mission on earth in Luke 4 and quoted from the Scroll of Isaiah to include elements of human compassion towards those in need and intentional work in a matter of what we might call social justice or I just prefer for most people so they don't get so hung up, biblical justice, as he talked about setting captives and prisoners free.

And so these are aspects of the gospel as Jesus understood them, as Jesus embodied them, and as Jesus commissioned or sent us out with him. So I would say that these types of aspects, sometimes the phrase the social gospel is a derogatory way to note the way that mid-19th century liberal Protestantism was watering the first tenet of the gospel, which is the importance of evangelical, the [inaudible 00:38:04] evangelical tenet of conversion, watering that down at the expense of a corporate or a social gospel that included these elements of justice, racial justice, attention to systemic poverty through economic alleviation programming.

So it can feel like a derogatory term. Oh, we're going to limit that because the gospel is really this, but Jesus didn't have room for that. He fed people on the hillside because they were hungry and human beings in need can have a need met by the Messiah. He also called them into relationship with himself. Not either or. It wasn't like a trick, like a pizza party in the junior high or youth group when you were a kid. It's like, "Hey, we're going to throw a pizza party. Bring your friends for the concert and then we're going to tell them about Jesus." It's just not a bait and switch, it's the full expression of the gospel.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, that's so helpful. Thanks for taking a moment to frame that for us theologically. I go right back to John 3:16, which is for God so loved the world and the origins of the word world are cosmos. It's all of creation, the world that he has made and entrusted to humanity. Because he loves the world, Christ died, and I think that's just a powerful framing for us as well. So thanks for helping us with that.

In today's show notes, we will link to two books that we mentioned during this episode: A link to Brandon's book, *A Burning House*, and also to the *King Jesus Gospel: The original Good News Revisited* by Scot McKnight, which just touches on some of the themes we've just described. So I'm excited about our next conversation in two weeks when we'll be exploring the practical implications of some of the themes we discussed in today's episode. So we'll see you again in our next episode.

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