

The following is as accurate a transcript as possible of Pastor Dan's sermon for Palm Sunday 2020, which was delivered extemporaneously without a manuscript. The Scripture referred to is from the Gospel of Matthew 21:1-11.

The people of Jerusalem at this time were experiencing a really difficult life. They were a people oppressed, a people looking to be saved, and that's I think something that we can all relate to these days.

Palm Sunday is a difficult nut to crack on the best of circumstances; it's a day of celebration that is followed only a few days later by a day of tragedy and morning followed shortly thereafter by a day of celebration yet again. We have Palm Sunday, we have holy week leading to Good Friday and the death of Jesus, and then we have on Easter what we look forward to all year: the resurrection of Christ and all that that means for us. But it's difficult to be celebratory in the world that we live in right now where we are surrounded by fear and... covered in oppression, and unsure what comes next.

We are a people like the people that Jesus encountered entering Jerusalem; we are a people reaching out to God and to our fellow people to be saved... and just like the people of Jerusalem we don't really know what that salvation is going to look like. The people of Jerusalem and all of the people in that area in that time they had these wonderful prophecies that were telling them so many amazing things about what the Messiah was going to look like and what the Messiah was going to do and what salvation is supposed to look like and how we are going to be saved, but no one really knew. The prophets were doing their best to understand what it was that God had in store for this people waiting to be saved, and *we* don't really know what to expect coming down the pike.

We pray for all manner of things. We pray in hope that a cure will come, that this time of distancing will be over, that we can celebrate again together, that we can

just go shopping without having to worry again. But don't know what that's going to look like; we don't know when it's going to come. The people of Jerusalem expected that Jesus would march through the streets, raise an army, and defeat the Romans who held Jerusalem captive. But instead just a few days later, when they realized that Jesus was not going to be doing just what they thought they were going to be seeing... that Jesus wasn't going to bring a salvation that they had been expecting for so long, that they had imagined in their heads and counted on their hearts... well the fear and the uncertainty was very easy to be co-opted by those in power to change those hosannas into shouts for Jesus head. Now I don't want to take that metaphor too far... no one needs that right now. But I think it's important for us to remember that even though Jesus' salvation looked different than what the people figured was going to happen because they thought they understood how God worked... doesn't mean it didn't happen. Christ was resurrected on Easter and Christ began a journey save us on that day.

Now I don't... I don't know what to tell you about salvation; everybody has their own points of view on what that means, what that looks like, how it works... We're all probably pretty wrong, just like the people of Jerusalem were pretty wrong about how Jesus was going to work. But what we saw, what we got, what God gave us... was a savior who taught us to be more like God. Who showed us how to live in hope, how to live in peace, how to bring the love of God to everyone that we meet regardless of the situations that we find ourselves in. And it's taken us two thousand years to unpack that: to go from where the people were in Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday... to where we are now, which still isn't the end because we still don't understand God, do we? Anyone who says they understand God... is probably lying to you.

So I don't know what salvation is going to look like for us in this pandemic world, in this world of distancing... but I know that it will come. I don't know what

answer to prayer looks like in the 21st Century world, not really... even though I see it every day. So we continue to pray, we continue to live in hope, and we continue to do our level best to actually learn from Jesus... the man who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey or a colt or a foal... that person that was cheered. That person who was crucified, that person who was mourned, and that person who rose again... and that person who continues to teach us every day. That person that somehow... is also God.

We live in a time of uncertainty, but when is that not true? We've lived in a time of uncertainty for the last two thousand years, and we've lived in a time of uncertainty since the human race was first born. But God has always offered us hope. God has always brought for us salvation. We may not know what it will look like; it may not be anything close to what we have guessed, but it will come. And we will stride forth, having learned so much from the Christ that we worship. And for that... well for that I pray, for that I am grateful, and for that I will soldier on, day by day. I hope that you'll join me. Let us keep our heads up, let us keep our hearts on our sleeves, let us live in love... and when we are afraid, when we are confused, when we are angry... let us always lean on Christ. For he will always be here for us. God will always be there for you. Thanks be to God.