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This is an outline of my sermon text for **Palm Sunday**, on **April 5, 2020**. My focus was on the two Gospel lessons, **Matthew 21:1-11** and **Matthew 27:15--56**. + pBRC

May God's grace, mercy and love be with you forever. AMEN.

- I remember one of the very first times that I was on a video conference call. It was with several of the people who I think may be participating in this service online from their homes.
 - I had been on one or two video calls before my first call with the Gang of Six Call Committee of the Covenant Churches, but that was the first time that I remember really using this technology to communicate.
 - One of the things I shared with that committee was that I am a Bible nerd.
 - I love to read and study Scripture, digging into it to learn something new, to see things from a different perspective.
 - My favorite area to study and to dig into is the story of the Passion of Jesus Christ.
 - Passion means suffering. It is used to describe the story of Jesus' final week, from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on one Sunday, to his crucifixion on Friday, and his resurrection on the following Sunday.
 - Specifically, his passion is the not quite 20 hours from when Jesus led his disciples from the upper room to go into a garden to pray until his death the next afternoon.
 - My favorite book that I try to re-read several chapters in these weeks around this week is this one, it is called, Death of the Messiah. Here is volume 2.
 - I love to dig into the details of what happened in that week, in those days.
 - What has always fascinated me is how quickly and how totally things changed.
 - As the threads of the stories of the Gospels are woven together, the calendar works out that a few weeks prior to the triumphal entry, Jesus and his disciples were headed from across the Jordan to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead.
 - A week before Passover, days before the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, Jesus had dinner at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.
 - From that stunning event, followed by the entry into Jerusalem, Matthew writes that Jesus went from the 'Hosannas' to the Temple to overturn the money changers tables.
 - The disciples thought on Sunday they were on the edge of a revolution. By Thursday night, they were scattered and on the run. On Saturday, they were locked in a room hiding.
 - For them, in just over 100 hours their world crashed down around them.

- In this subject where I have a deep passion, a deep craving to learn, a deep desire to dig into the journey of faith, I have not read one line about today's lessons.
- I didn't feel the need to dig into people who are seeing their world dramatically change.
 - We all have been living it.
 - In my lifetime, I can only relate this to 9/11, when the world changed in a morning.
 - For those of you who lived here 25 years ago, the day the Murrah Building was bombed has to be a day when the world changed for you.
 - The Kennedy assassination, Pearl Harbor, there are only a few days in our lives, thank God, when the world is a different place when you go to bed than it was when you got up.
 - That's the lens from which I see these lessons. How did everything change so much so fast?
 - How do we deal with the world changing events here?
 - While the disciples aren't featured in these lessons, I want to focus on them.
- **They did what Jesus told them, even if they didn't understand.**
 - Jesus told them to go into a village and take a donkey and a colt, and if asked, say *'The Lord needs them.'*^A
 - They follow Jesus into Jerusalem, taking in the adulation of the crowd, and then they follow Jesus into the Temple where he sows the seeds of chaos, overturning the tables of the money changers.
 - They hear him fend off the taunts, tests and challenges from the chief priests and elders, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, all trying to trap Jesus, trying to get him to say something they can use to bring him down.
 - They hear him talk and teach in parables, all focusing on how the leaders don't understand the way God is working.
 - They hear him talk about how the Temple, the center of their faith, will be torn down.
- **They trust in what Jesus told them, even if they didn't understand.**
 - They hear him tell them that they will be persecuted in his name, because they follow him.
 - They hear him tell them, almost in a countdown, that he will be handed over to the authorities, but he will be raised.
 - They hear him tell them at their Passover dinner that one of them will betray him, one will deny him, and the rest will desert him.
 - They hear the crowd from Jerusalem which warmly welcomed them, call for a terrorist to be freed and for their leader, to be crucified.
- **They stayed together, even if they didn't understand.**
 - Other gospels report that they stayed hidden and locked in the upper room where they shared Jesus' last supper, but Matthew records that the women told the disciples Jesus wanted to meet them in Galilee.
 - They went and saw him there, but *When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.*^B
 - Even seeing their risen Lord, some doubted.
- Given the world we are living in, with stay at home orders, people wearing masks and gloves becoming the norm, with the predictions of fatalities reaching into the hundreds of thousands, we can use some guidance.
 - Even if we don't understand, do what Jesus taught us.
 - Find ways to love God.
 - Be in prayer. Read and study Scripture.
 - Find ways to love our neighbor.

- Check in on one another. Help those who you can. Pray for one another.
- Even if we don't understand, trust in what Jesus promised.
 - Believe in the promises that were won on the cross and made in our baptisms.
 - Your sins are forgiven.
 - Death has been defeated. Like Christ, we too shall be raised.
 - God's love is too deep for us to comprehend.
 - Even if we don't know how, even if we doubt, God's love is there for us.
- Even if we don't understand, we need to stay together.
 - We need to support one another. We need to take care of one another.
 - We need to respect one another. We need to love one another.
- As we enter into the strangest Holy Week of our lives, I encourage all of us, even if we don't understand to trust and follow in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
 - In the words of the hymn we are about to sing:
 - ***I am putting all my trust in thee. Lead me, O Lord, lead me.***

AMEN.

^A Matthew 21:3.

^B Matthew 28:17.