

“Righteous Living Under Civil Authority”

Rev. Dave Latham

Series: *Romans*

Bible Text: Romans 13:1-7

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Thank you, Luke. I love having our ruling elders lead us in prayer. I hope you do too. This morning, we welcome to the pulpit a guest preacher. If you're on the email list, you got an email about this. You know, we said at the vision dinner, Hey, we just planted a church. Now we're going to rest and relax and kind of regroup as a church. And that's true. But the ruling elders and pastors don't really get to do that. Because if we're going to plant another church down the line in a year and a half or so, a couple of years, there are things we need to be doing now. And finding the next church planter is one of those. And so over the weekend, we've had Reverend Dave Latham here with us and have spent some time getting to know him. And he's going to preach for us this morning, he gets the Christians relationship to the government passage in the Roman series. So sometimes things just work out for me. You know, I don't know why. But first thing you need to know about Dave is that he is not related to Jimmy Latham. Let the records show they are not related, except in the Lord. But Dave is married to Rebecca. They have two children, Stokes and Ellie Grace. He graduated from Presbyterian College. He went to RTS, Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte. He and I were students at the same time and interned in the same church. And he has planted a campus ministry, Reformed University Fellowship in Virginia. He's been an assistant pastor. He's been a director of admissions for two different seminaries. And most recently, he's been a senior pastor of a church in Alabama. And so we're happy to welcome him to the pulpit this morning. So come on, Dave.

Well, good morning, everybody. You know, one of the great rules of showbiz is never follow the kids. So I'm down one. The other one is, you know, the best way to ruin a good party is to talk about religion and politics. But hey, here we are. What could possibly go wrong? Thanks, Hobie, for this great passage. Actually, it's a wonderful passage for us to dwell upon the goodness and sovereignty of God. It is one of those tricky passages. It's one of those that kind of makes our jaws tighten a little bit. But it's also one of those that helps us to reckon with our own hearts and to also reckon with just who God is and what he's doing in this world around us. And so if you have a Bible, I'd invite you to open up to Romans Chapter 13. We're going to stick around after the service. We'd love to get to know you would love to just talk and catch up. And my family's here and they're great. And so make sure you stick around and meet my great family.

But if you have no idea where Romans is, hopefully at this point, if you've been coming to the church for a while, you it sounds like you've been in Romans for a while. But if you don't know where Romans is, it's not a sin to use the table of contents. So feel free to use that. It's in the New Testament. So go about halfway in your Bible. Start flipping to the right. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans. Look for the big number 13. That's the chapter that we're going to be in. And we're going to read the first seven verses. I don't say that to insult your intelligence, but not everybody knows how to look things up in the Bible. And so just trying to help you get there. And the way the Bible works, the Old Testament says somebody's coming. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Gospels say somebody's here, and the whole rest of the New Testament says somebody's coming again. Who is that someone? Our promised Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who's mentioned a page and a half in the Bible in Genesis 3:15.

And so kind of while you're settling in here, I want you to imagine an illustration. Imagine you're driving down the road, and you see those dreaded blue lights behind you. We've all been there before. If not, probably your time's coming because we're all, we all mess up. You're speeding though. You knew you were speeding. You know you're guilty. What's your first inclination as the officer walks up? I'm imagining you probably roll down the window. You kindly thank the officer for his continued service to the community. You thank God that he has put authorities in place over you to punish you when you were wrong. You joyously take that ticket. You say, thank you, Lord. And you worship God as you pull away ticket in hand with your court date circled. No, that's not what we do, is it? You immediately get mad. You try to figure out how to get out of the ticket. You blame somebody else. You point out that everybody else has been speeding. I mean, even you. I mean, I'm not the only one. Why are you going to single me out? But our reaction in this situation should point to the one big problem that we all share. Our hearts are rebellious and we don't want to submit to anything or anyone but ourselves.

And while you turn in there to Romans 13, I want to kind of just quickly remind you of the context of this passage. Paul's been telling us how to respond to the undeserved grace and mercy of God through righteous living in our kind of our normal everyday lives inside the church, most notably functioning as a corporate body of faith and then individually as members of that church body who kind of go out into the world. And how do we bring this gospel to bear in the world around us? And now Paul tells us how to respond to the love of God by living as citizens in kind of the real world. And this is one area where the large chapter number in our Bibles actually makes us think that this is an entirely new line of thought. But this is actually an extension of Paul's teaching on the marks of a gospel shaped life and his encouragement to extend genuine love to others, to bless those who persecute you and to not repay evil with evil. And you'll notice in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, it's kind of the big thesis statement for this entire section that even runs through chapter 15. Here's kind of the big thesis statement from Romans 12:1 and 2.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

This passage is kind of an extension of that main thesis statement and even what was talked about last week. And so just as Steve talked about last week how his northern accent sticks out from the world around him, and many of you in the south are, bless his heart. Paul is saying that people changed by the gospel should stick out from the world around them. You should be able to see it. You should be able to kind of hear it. Something should be different. And let's find out how the gospel applies to our lives as everyday citizens. So kind of with that in your mind, let's look at God's word. Romans chapter 13, verses 1 through 7. Let's give attention to the reading of God's word.

1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever. I'm very thankful for that, and I hope you are as well. Let's pray together and ask for God's help as we look to this passage. Please pray with me.

Almighty God, we are grateful for your word. We're grateful for passages like this. They remind us of who we truly are, what we wrestle with, but they remind us of your goodness and your graciousness and your patient long-suffering care for your people. Might you, Lord, by your spirit, take these words and apply them to our hearts as you see fit. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

All right, so the big question we're going to talk about this morning, if you're a note-taking type of person, is simply this. **Why should Christians submit to governing authorities?** We're going to see three main reasons this morning, and just for your own reference, we're going to spend a little bit more time in point one. It kind of sets everything up. So when I say now, and here's the second reason, just know that reason two and three are going to be shorter, just for you to know that ahead of time, as some of you might have a roast in the crock pot. But the first reason that we see here when we're asking why should Christians submit to governing authorities, the first reason is Christians submit because rulers have God-given authority.

Christians submit because rulers have God-given authority.

This is basically verses one and two. Now, Paul does not begin with these two verses by accident. He knows that this truth drives everything else in his argument for Christian submission. Look at the first half of verse one here.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.

Now, this first verse, I mean, we're straight out of the gates. This first verse kind of already makes our jaws tighten up because what it does is it strikes right at the core of our sinful hearts. But there is no wiggle room. God is calling his people to submit to authority. I mean, it's right there. Now, we hate to submit to anything. It's a manifestation of our rebellious nature. And Paul knew this well. Paul says and uses actually the same Greek verb in Romans chapter eight verse seven to describe our rebellion. He wrote; *the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.* Humans like to fool themselves into thinking that we have our own authority. But look at what Paul says in the second half of the verse, verse one. He says,

for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Now, when we hear verses like this, there should be really one word that rings in our ears. And that word is sovereignty, right? We love that kind of in the reformed Presbyterian world. This word sovereignty should be ringing like a bell in our ears. And why? Because there's only one throne in the universe and Christ is sitting on it. Are you grateful for that? I couldn't get out of bed some mornings if I didn't believe that. That there is one throne in the universe you can go to Revelation four, it'll tell you all about that. This is actually incredible news. Now, why is that incredible news? Well, and how does that hit in our backyard? It's incredible news because we need to be reminded of this.

Under a sovereign God, no one can rise to power unless our sovereign God permits it.

He is ruling and reigning over all things. Don't believe me? Here's what Daniel 2:21 says.

He changes times and seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.

That is our sovereign God whom we worship. Now, we typically like the idea of God's sovereignty and providence when the people we like from our political stripe are in power.

But, hold on, he's about to step on our toes. But what about when those we don't quite care for or agree with are in power? Is God any less sovereign? Is God any less good? The answer is no, he's not. All a part of his divine providence.

Now, if you're anything like me, we can all immediately think of the wicked kings and dictators who have been in power. Hobie even read earlier, you know, like, here's like one good king in the Old Testament, but there actually were a lot of like not good ones. And you think we can all think of instances like this and it makes us kind of cringe. But again, here's where this word sovereignty is actually a great comfort to us this morning, because

God can sovereignly use the chaotic sinfulness of men to accomplish his perfect redemptive plan for his glory, even in this messed up world.

This is great news for God's people, because it means there's always someone more powerful on the throne of heaven and he is always in control. Is that good news for you? Regardless of what the current political landscape looks like or what it might look like five years from now, I don't know. Ultimately, at the end of the day, there's great news for us people, because we have one who sits on the throne of heaven and he will never relinquish control. And we can rest in that. Rest in him. It should propel us to worship God. Even when you look in Revelation, you see this image of the throne and what are the people doing around the throne? They are worshiping. They are casting their crowns down worthy, worthy, worthy. Holy are you, O Lord. We hear God calling us to submit through Paul and we bristle. But Paul goes on to warn that resistance to civil authority is actually resistance to God's authority. This is tough. Look at verse two. Therefore, so in light of what we just said in verse one,

therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed and those who resist will incur judgment.

God has willed that there are to be orderly states that govern and to resist them is to resist what God has sovereignly instituted, and to resist by setting yourself up as the ultimate authority.

Last Sunday, you looked at Romans chapter 12 verse 19. This is kind of a great passage. Remember, this is just an extension of what you talked about last week.

Romans 12:19. Beloved, never avenge yourself, but leave it to the wrath of God for it is written, vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord.

Paul clearly states that rebellion against what God has established is sin. And so our rebellion can have, did you notice, both earthly and eternal consequences? That's kind of scary when you think about it.

Now as our jaws tighten again as we hear God's command to submit to government, it doesn't mean that we can't criticize or critique the wayward ways of human government. The work of the government must be done in a lawful manner. If a person is properly exercising their office within the bounds of scripture and the law of the land, we're obligated to respect and obey them as unto the Lord. Oh, but let's face it. The next question we're all asking is the same question, right?

When is it acceptable not to submit?

Now it's impossible to unpack every nuance in this, this morning. We would be here for the next three months going through what about this and what about that? All I can do is just kind of hit the big principle. But the overarching principle is clear even when we see it through the lives and testimonies of others in the scripture.

One of our core beliefs kind of in the reformed Presbyterian world is scripture interprets scripture. So how do we see other parts of scripture informing how we should think about this passage? Let me give you a couple of examples.

In the book of Exodus, when Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill the newborn babies, the scripture tells us that the midwives feared God and disobeyed Pharaoh.

In Daniel chapter three, famous passage, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to obey when King Nebuchadnezzar ordered his subjects to worship his golden image, even if it meant death in a fiery furnace.

In the book of Acts, the apostles were arrested and sent before the Sanhedrin. These were like 71 men who basically functioned like a Jewish Supreme Court. The apostles were commanded not to teach in Jesus's name, but in Acts chapter five, verse 29, we hear Peter's response to the Sanhedrin. *We must obey God rather than men.*

When you look at kind of that overarching passage there, we as Christians are called to submit to government right up to the point where obedience to civil authority would mean disobedience to God. We must echo Peter's words. We must obey God rather than man. We resist if the government forces us to do something immoral or to violate our Christian conscience or to go against what is clearly laid out in the scripture.

So are we only to protest the actions of government when they are directly contrary to scripture? What about laws and decisions that are unjust or immoral, even though not expressly forbidden?

We as Christians are called to obey the government that's been placed over us, but this does not mean that we have to agree with everything. We understand that and recognize that it's fallen and imperfect, just like us. Everything's been impacted by the fall. But rather than grab the torches and revolt as our first reaction, we should hit our knees in prayer and ask God to give us the strength and patience to submit and to worship God while we wait and trust him.

How many times do you see in the scriptures in the Old Testament where people are suffering under a wicked king, under just ruthless, ruthless government and persecution? And how many times did they say, Lord, don't you see? Lord, help us to worship you in the midst of this. Help us to wait. Help us to trust. Help us to lean into you more. So we're called to submit because God has instituted this structure and rulers have God-given authority.

But the second reason that Paul gives us is;

Christians submit because rulers operate actually for the benefit of the governed.

A society, I mean think about this, a society with no laws is no society at all. Could you imagine what it would be like to live with no laws, no rules, no one to actually kind of punish the wickedness? That would be awful. Just an endless cycle of wickedness, death, and destruction. We see this oftentimes even in other cultures, like you kill somebody I love, so I'm going to kill you. And then that person is going to kill somebody I love. You steal from me, I'm going to steal from you. And then they're going to steal from me. And the cycle goes around and around. Here's what Calvin said. He said,

except the fury of the wicked be resisted and the innocent be protected from their violence, all things would come to an entire confusion.

Could you imagine even what it'd be like driving on an interstate with no speed limits? Or worse yet, no fear of having any sort of state trooper or anything like that that might actually punish someone who flies by you going 130 miles an hour without a care in the world, weaving in and out? What about if, what if stop signs didn't exist? Could you imagine how terrifying that would be? We take it for granted. But these little signs of God's order that he's placed in.

But properly understanding our own depravity in light of a holy God helps us understand a couple of things. We understand that we're wicked and we're messed up and we've been bent by the fall. But even as we wrestle with that and our jaws tighten up and we hear the word submit to authority, it should remind us of just how good God is. Think about the depths of the father's love and long suffering as he continues to work to redeem his fallen church and rescue back his people. How much judgment we would deserve if it weren't for the shed blood of Christ that covers us and protects us from God's divine justice that we rightly deserve because of our cosmic rebellion. We are all law breakers according to the holy law of God.

And aren't you thankful for Christ who kept the law perfectly for you so that you could be given a righteousness that is not your own under that holy law?

God is holy, holy, holy. And the scripture tells us that we are not, not, not.

But God is faithful and God is patient and God is kind. And even in the midst of brokenness, God gives us a great blessing because rulers are God's servants for good.

Notice Paul does not speak of only Christians being blessed by government structure. Matthew 5:45 says *he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

This is what Christ is speaking of what we like to call theologically common grace that's extended to all of creation. And this common grace in concert with civil authority is God's way of restraining sin enough to make what we consider normal life possible in this fallen world. And we just take it for granted.

We should be thankful to God for civil authority because it keeps us from having to be afraid of walking out the door each morning or driving on the interstate. I mean there's visible signs of God's restraint on sin through civil government everywhere we look. Police officers, jails, laws, speed limits, the military. I mean just think the list goes on and on. We receive these practical benefits even when the government is expressly non-Christian. Even then it's a gift.

God is still sovereign over it even though it doesn't honor him. You thought about that? God is still sovereign over even a wicked government that shakes his fist at him. But ladies and gentlemen isn't that the story of our salvation? While we were his enemies shaking our fist at him, I will not submit to you, I want to be my own king, even in the midst of that,

God sovereignly sought us out and changed our hearts while we were his enemies, and has taken law breakers and pulled them into his adopted forever family by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Don't you see it? See, we like to put ourselves in the seat of like oh I've never broken a law in my whole life. Look at me, I'm a perfect citizen. Is that what your Bible says? It's not what mine says. And aren't you grateful fellow law breakers that we have someone who sought us out when we were at our worst and we have a savior who kept the law perfectly for us because we couldn't do it? And his record given to us, our sin reckoned to his account, him hanging between heaven and earth for us. It's the story of our salvation. Aren't you thankful for a sovereign God?

In the first half of verse three, Paul points out another facet of how rulers are God's servant for good. He said *for rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad*. Submission carries the real blessing of not having to fear the punishment of the civil authorities.

Anybody in here ever seen the show Cops? It's usually on like every night on some channel. Cops is always on. And every now and then our family will watch Cops, you know, and you just kind of marvel at what's going on. Number one, it makes you thankful for police officers. If you've ever known a cop, you know, I had a friend of mine, he's like, I just get tired of getting lied to all the time. What are you doing? Nothing. Oh, really? What's that? And they always say the same thing. What's that in your pockets? Man, these aren't even my pants. And I'm like, and the cop goes, really? But oftentimes we'll watch the show with our kids and it's kind of like a little teaching. My kids are older, okay? So we're watching, then we're like, kids, there's one thing that you need to take away from watching this show. Just act right. Just act right. And the cops won't get you. That's all you got to do. Just obey the law and obviously don't wear somebody else's pants.

But civil authorities have also been placed there to institute punishment. Look again at verse four. Government's been instituted to promote order and peace. And one of the ways that it accomplishes this is the God given task of punishing those who openly rebel against authority. Again, this doesn't mean that human governments will always perform this function properly, but Paul is still warning us, here's the big idea, to not take vengeance into our own hands, to not take the law into our own hands. Here's what Kent Hughes said.

The state renders evil for evil, which the individual Christian must never do. God's way of dealing with evil is not by personal vengeance, but through justice dispensed by the state. Through the state comes an anticipatory display of God's wrath against sin. And as the state is faithful to its function, it does good to us. We should be thankful that it does not bear the sword in vain, even though it bears it imperfectly.

Paul tells those who do wrong to be afraid because the civil authority is acting as God's agent of wrath and justice in society. It almost points forward, gives us like a little glimpse of that future day of judgment when Christ will return in glory and all of the wickedness and evil will be dealt with as he comes back with a sword coming out of his mouth as a victorious king.

Don't you find yourself longing for that day? Someone has wronged you in the past and you're just crying out, how long, oh Lord, how long will you not come and make this right? And one of the things that the scripture clearly screams at us is your king is coming back and he's gonna make it right. The evil will be taken care of. Will not the judge of all the earth do what is right? And the answer is, of course he will. Of course he will. And we lean into that. Again, here's what Calvin said,

and private men are reminded that it is through the divine goodness that they are defended by the sword of princes against injuries done by the wicked.

Now third and finally, Paul gives us a final reason based on this passage as to why Christians should submit.

We submit because God commands us to be good citizens while living under the structure he has established.

At the beginning of verse five, Paul uses a therefore to draw a conclusion to the previous four verses, right? You see a therefore, you're like, hey, in light of what I just said, here's something else. So in the last three verses, Paul switches gears a bit and moves from focuses on why we submit to now like how we should submit. What's that look like? Here's the big principle. Now let's flush it out a little bit.

Remember, without Christ in the work of the Holy Spirit, we remain in our rebellious sinful nature. God is calling us to be good citizens, where our hearts want to be anything but good citizens. We want to be the kings and the queens. It's the age-old heart struggle that we all have between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of self. It's always there, this tension that exists. But Paul is saying that good citizenship is actually a sign of a Holy Spirit redeemed conscience, because the pattern of this world is a closed fist kind of rebellion to any authority structure. Any sort of like, you will never tell me what to do.

By contrast, the pattern of Christian living is open-handed submission to authority because it's lived in light of God's sovereignty. And the fact that we have been graciously delivered from the ultimate judgment for our sin because of what Christ accomplished for us on the cross. We live it in light of God. You're sovereign and you're so good. And we see evidences of your kingdom breaking through. And I was once a lawbreaker, but now have been brought in. Thank you, Lord. Help me. Help me, Lord. Help me, Lord, to submit and to live unto your glory in all that I do.

In verses six through seven, Paul gives us a tangible application of what citizenship looks like by telling us that good citizenship is actually marked by respect for others. Look at what Paul says.

For because of this, you also pay taxes for the authorities and ministers of God attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them, taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

So you look at this and you see these verses and Paul has given us a couple of really tangible things. Paul calls the authorities ministers of God. They might not all be Christians, but they're doing God's work through their government involvement. And all of them ultimately are under his sovereign authority. Remember, there's no free radicals in the universe. God orders and oversees them all.

Look at verse seven. Oh, boy. Oh, verse seven. One way that normal ordered life is accomplished is through the regular collection of taxes. This is where our jaws really tighten, isn't it? Especially as April 15th is looming. We feel that jaw tighten up. But I think Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this verse is actually really helpful in this instance. Here's what he said.

That's also why you pay taxes so that an orderly way of life can be maintained. Fulfill your obligations as a citizen, pay your taxes, pay your bills, respect your leaders.

Just normal stuff, right? When you think about taxes, I mean, I know for me, I'm grateful that, you know, the roads are maintained. I hope you are. I mean, imagine like potholes everywhere. I mean, you know, taxes go for that kind of stuff. You know, for me, like when my grandma was still alive, my grandma lived on a Social Security check. It was my joy to pay into Social Security so that my grandma could buy groceries. It's my little part. Here you go. You know, hold loosely to these things. And I'm saying, I'm grateful.

Now, you think about this, and we think about what's going on here, and you're like, how is this guy going to land this plane? That's a fair question. Thanks again, Hobie. But Jesus and Paul knew exactly how sinful the Roman emperors were, and they still called them to be good citizens and to seek the welfare of the place where God had placed them. That's our call too. Paul's not writing in a vacuum. He knew about the heart struggle that we share, but he also knew about the greatest misuse of government power that ever existed. The only sinless man who ever lived the perfect Son of God, nailed to a cross by a wicked Roman government and a crooked religious establishment who mocked him to the very end. Paul knew very well about this.

The most just corrupt misuse of government power ever. And even after his death, what did the Roman Empire do? Did they say, oh, Christians, like, we're good, we're good? No, they doubled down, right? Came after him, persecuting. Pilate's words to Christ in John chapter 19 verse 10. Here's what Pontius Pilate said. He said,

do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?

Here's how Jesus responded.

You would have no authority over me unless it had been given to you from above.

It's like, who do you think you are? But yet, Jesus submitted to an unjust Roman crucifixion because he knew it was the will of his father, and he had to do it. And as Hobie said, he set his face towards Jerusalem, knowing full well that the cross lay at the end of it. That's where all of this is heading this week, as we think about what Christ has done for us.

Speaking of the triumphal entry on Palm Sunday, here's what Köstenberger said.

Up to this point in Jesus's ministry, he could have managed to live a long, happy, peaceful life. But his actions on Sunday set into motion a series of events that could result only either in the overthrow of the Romans and the current religious establishment or his brutal death. He has crossed the point of no return, and there would be no turning back.

Aren't you grateful that your Savior went all the way? He didn't take the easy way out. He didn't turn back. He knew that the cross lay before him, and he got on that donkey, and he rode in, knowing full well that the cross was there, his brutal death right over the hill. Aren't you glad that he went all the way for you? Aren't you glad? Is this on? Aren't you glad for that? I hope you are. I know I am.

God sovereignly used the wickedness of Rome to bring about the redemption of his people from their bondage to sin because of their cosmic rebellion and disobedience.

Our good and gracious King rode in on a humble beast of burden on Palm Sunday so that Scripture would be fulfilled and so that we could be set free from sin's power. The manger, the cross, the crown, they all hang together. They all work together for the redemption of God's people, and because of that, we join in the shouts of Palm Sunday, Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna. What's the call then? Why should you care? What's the one thing I want you to think about as you head out of here?

Trust in Christ, rest in Christ, hope in Christ, and bring glory to God as you serve as good citizens and submit to those whom God has put in authority over you. Pray for your leaders. We're commanded to do that. Serve your neighbors. Live as those who were once enemies of God but by now, by now who by grace have been brought into the family.

And we echo the words of Zechariah that we heard earlier that accompanied the waving of the palm branches, even as we live in this broken and fallen world and we see how messed up it is, I got some good news for you. Fear not. *Fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold, your King is coming, and he's coming back.* In the name of the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit. Amen. Let me pray.

Lord, thank you for your kindness and your mercy. Thank you for with this great love with which you loved us. Lord, as we're about to sing about our Savior's love and how good it is, as we've already heard as the kids sang, thrown into a sea without bottom or shore, our sins they are many but his mercy is more. We're so grateful, Lord, that you sit on the throne, that you order and are sovereignly over absolutely everything and that you have promised to return in glory to fix all that is wrong and wicked and evil, bring justice and judgment but then peace, peace, peace for all eternity. Lord, we long for that day but even in the meantime, Lord, help us to die to ourselves and live unto Christ. Help us to be good citizens and work for the good of the place in which you have planted us for your glory, not our own. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

**Portion of scripture read before sermon—2 Chronicles 19:4-7