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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT UNITED
APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: You've given me a promotion. Thank you. Good morning, everybody. What a joy to be at United Apostolic. It is a joy, isn't it, for all of us.

[Applause]

First, I want to give honor to God, without Him this day would not be possible.

[Applause]

And thank you again, Inez Johnson, thank you for the kind introduction. Thank you for – and I love that everyone who does such good work is getting acknowledged. We all could use a little more acknowledgement for all the hard work and thank God to all of you for what you do.

[Applause]

Now, Pastor, I need to ask you a question as I begin. Many churches have different approaches, some call their gathering, or the group of people who sing and perform, a praise team, some call it a choir or chorus. What do you prefer? Praise singers. I want to tell you this, Pastor, I was listening, and it was moving, powerful. It really was.

[Applause]

From the heart. I thought in the middle of that extraordinary moment, I thought to myself, wait a minute, I have a – I have a public service, a duty to perform here. I need to get a telephone immediately. And Pastor, I need to tell you why. I needed to call the Fire Department because the praise singers were on fire.

[Applause]

So, thank you all. Thank you for what you do. Thank you.

[Applause]

Pastor Gordon, thank you for the amazing service you do. Amazing service you do here.

[Applause]

And that is not just a spiritual service you do. The service you do to the whole community. When people have gone through so much in these months, this church was there for the whole community.

[Applause]

I thank you. And Pastor Astrenett, I thank you for your leadership as well. Thank you for all you do.

[Applause]

I want to remind everyone of a reality here in our city, in our Gracie Mansion. My wife, Chirlane, our First Lady, she has created a new rule at Gracie Mansion. She says we will not use some of those phrases we were brought up with. We used to be told, behind every great man stood a great woman. We used to say, behind. At Gracie Mansion, there's a rule. You can only say, beside every great man stands a great woman. So, thank you for all you do.

[Applause]

And to Reverend Michael Edwards, thank you for the incredible foundation you built here.

[Applause]

So many people – please everyone, please be seated, thank you. Where are my manners?

[Laughter]

And so, I'm going to be brief today and thank you for the opportunity to share a few moments with you, but look, so many people have served during this crisis. I want to take a moment to appreciate anyone who is a health care worker, anyone who's an essential worker, anyone who has been there for all of us, God bless you. And thank you.

[Applause]

Thank you for all you have done. You saw us through. And we could literally – if I thought, if I stayed here all day and said, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, I could not thank you enough. That is the truth because of everything you have done.

[Applause]

I also really appreciate, moments ago, the acknowledgement of the folks that I work with in City government, they do extraordinary work. A lot of these folks have been working nonstop since March 1st, literally every single day since March 1st, to protect the people in this city I want to thank all of them.

[Applause]

And a special thank you to a proud member of the Southeast Queens community. And he has really been one of the people I've depended on the most. Well before I was mayor and literally every day, I have been mayor, Harold Miller has been one of my chief lieutenants in this work we do. And Harold, thank you.

[Applause]

Thank you for all you have done. You know, to get things done, if you think of the things we've done, if you like Pre-K for All or you like affordable housing or any of the things we've done in these years, I have to say thank you to the people who made it happen on my team. You can't do it alone. So, thank you, Harold. Thank you for being there every step of the way.

[Applause]

Everyone, let's take stock for a moment. I want to say something that I think we all know subconsciously. I'm not sure we think about it consciously enough, a year ago, this very day, if I were standing here this very day and I said, brothers and sisters, I want to talk to you about the coronavirus, a lot of you would be looking at each other saying, what is he talking about, what's that word? A year ago, we literally had barely heard of it, and it was new to the world. And then in the months that came, we got to know it all too well. Imagine something so transformative in our lives, so painful that did not exist a year ago, how shocking.

A lot of people here and every gathering I go to in this city, people have felt the pain. A lot of people have lost a loved one, lost a job, are feeling the effects of the disease still. If that was where the story ended, it would be just a story of tragedy and shock. But thank God, brothers and sisters, that's where the story began and there was much more, there was much more to be told because the coronavirus thought it could ravage us, clever enemy it is indeed. It thought it could ravage us, shock us, and surprise us. But the coronavirus didn't bank on New Yorkers and the power and the strength of every one of you.

[Applause]

So, it came to this city out of nowhere. In February, it was spreading. We didn't even have the testing to know that. By March, we were living in that shocking reality, April – those months that were so difficult. We were the epicenter. Let's not mistake it for a moment. We were the epicenter in the United States of America. The pain, the challenge, it was all here. And many places that bear that kind of brunt, well you wouldn't fault them if they fell back on their heels and felt defeated and overwhelmed. But I have to say there was not one single day where New Yorkers stopped fighting back, not one day. And so, in March and April, we were the epicenter. But by the summer we were one of the safest places in the United States of America.

[Applause]

That comeback story was extraordinary, and it was written by every one of you by the things you did, discipline and strength you showed. They said New York City couldn't come back. But in record time, we turned the tables. We went from worst to first.

[Applause]

Or, Pastor, to compare to one of the most powerful passages in scripture, “The first shall be last, and the last shall be first.”

[Applause]

We lived out that word, those words, that idea. We lived it. And then they said, there's no way we could open our schools again, but you know what? Our parents, our children needed their schools back. And so nowhere else, you could look around big cities all over America, they couldn't open their schools up again, but in New York City we did, and our children went back to school and our children are in school now.

[Applause]

And then came one of the most consequential days in the history of the city and this nation, Election Day 2020. And they said, well, there's a pandemic, people won't get engaged, people won't get involved, they won't turn out to vote in a pandemic. Well guess what New Yorkers did? They turned out in record numbers to vote on Election Day and early voting like never before, the highest vote in a century in New York City.

[Applause]

And in just weeks, we will get to say some words that are going to warm my heart as I say them, I hope they warm your heart too – President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

[Applause]

And you did that and good people all over the nation did that and they were not defeated. They would not be defeated. And now the last great battle against the coronavirus, I'll take you right to today. We are in the last great battle. And I don't mean that as some words of false inspiration, I am speaking from the heart. This is the decisive moment because the coronavirus is trying once again, the second wave is here, but just as the coronavirus got a little overconfident, here came the vaccine to New York City. The vaccine is here in New York City to fight back against the coronavirus and protect us all. This is something we must respect what the medical community, the scientific community did, because there are some people that don't believe in miracles, but I see when miracles occur in our lives and in our whole society, this virus not even known a year ago, the entire global scientific and health community put their minds together and came up with a vaccine. It has been proven, it has been tested, it has been scrutinized like nothing in the history of humanity.

And I want people to believe in this vaccine and the way I'm going to help to bear witness is by saying when my moment comes, when the health leadership says, “it's your turn, Mayor,” I will be there on camera taking that vaccine because I believe in that vaccine, I want people to be safe.

[Applause]

My family will, the doctors who advise me will. We believe in it. We believe it is safe. We believe it is effective. We will make sure it is distributed all over the city. And I want to emphasize this point, folks who are wealthy and privileged, they don't get to jump the line. They don't get to jump the line.

[Applause]

It's when people need the vaccine, our health care heroes need it first. The folks in the nursing homes need it first. All the people who bore the brunt, the neighborhoods in the city that bore the brunt of the coronavirus, they deserve the distribution ahead of some who have wealth and privilege. So, if there's anyone here, as you hear me talk, who says, you know what, I still have questions, I still have concerns, maybe even fears. I want to validate that. I want to respect that because it is new. And you should question things that are new, that's absolutely fair. And it's our job to answer and help you to believe. If someone says there's a bad history in this country, the way people of African descent have been treated by the medical community, bears the clear stamp of institutional racism, you are correct. And that is tragic, but we will not let that hold us back. We don't want to live in that bad past. We need to write a new chapter, a new chapter of decency and fairness and respect for all people.

[Applause]

This very virus has ravaged communities of color. And if the vaccine can protect people of African descent, Latinos, Asians, if the vaccine can right that wrong, I don't want to see a tragedy where people distrust it and turn away from it because of that all too painful, all too true past. How about in this time we rewrite the rules together? Imagine a world where there was some fairness, how about we create that together? Do you believe that can be done?

[Applause]

We have to. And I'll conclude with this – we're worried. The coronavirus worries us, the vaccine. So many people are worried about their future. How will they pay the bills? Where will be a job they can depend on? These are worries pervading every inch of this city. People worry will it be the same place in the future? Will we be strong? And someone came up to me a few weeks ago, really filled with passion, concern, and said, 'Mayor, I'm worried.' He said, 'Do you think New York City can ever regain its past glory?' I thought about it. It was a heartfelt question. I thought about it. And I said to myself, wait a minute. I don't think that's the right question. I don't want to just repeat what we had in the past, because I remember life before the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the cost of living was too high in New York City. Before the pandemic, people couldn't afford a place to live in New York City. Before the pandemic, people were not being paid their fair share in New York City. There was discrimination. There was racism. Let's not paint such a gauzy, nostalgic picture that back in February, the world was perfect.

Let's think about what we have to do differently. And, yes, we've been through pain, we've been through challenge, but in this crisis, a door has opened. In every crisis there is the possibility of transformation. In this season, we think about redemption, don't we? In this season, we think about change and what could be. So, I said to this good New Yorker, I said, that is not the right

question, can we regain our past glory. The question is, how do we reach our greater glory? How do we move to a better place?

[Applause]

And I tell you it can be done. And I know why, because I'm looking at the people who will achieve this greatness. And never for a moment, lack faith in your own greatness because you've proven it this year. If you ever wondered before, look at what you did this year. Look what you did. The heroic work you did.

[Applause]

There are many voices in our society that try to take away our honor, try to take away our worth and our value, but I always say never let anyone talk you out of your own power. They try often, but don't let anyone talk you out of your own power because we can create a better city. We truly can. Why? Because this is a place filled with over eight million New Yorkers and New Yorkers do amazing things, amazing things.

[Applause]

When they say it is not possible, that is a challenge and a dare to a New Yorker. 'Oh, you're telling me it's not possible. I hope you'll be here when I prove to you, I just did it.' That's who we are. So, something greater is ahead. We will build it together. And I wish everyone in this joyous season, a Merry Christmas, a Happy Kwanzaa, a Happy New Year. By the way, 2020 is almost over.

[Applause]

So, it will be a happy new year. Thank you. And God bless you all.

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