

THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT MT. OLIVET  
BAPTIST CHURCH OF HOLLIS**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everybody. It is a joy – it is a joy to be with you. It is really a joy to be together, isn't it?

[Applause]

A joy to be a Mt. Olivet, this wonderful place, this a place of power and faith. And first I want to give honor to God, without Him this day would not be possible.

[Applause]

Now, are you familiar with the phrase, tough act to follow? Pastor, when you invite a guest into your house, you can't be such a powerful, emotional, passionate orator as to leave me nothing to do. So, Pastor, I thank you. I thank you for that passion. I thank you for all you do as a spiritual leader, but also as a leader of this community, to help people through this crisis. Mount Olivet has been there for the community, been there for people in need. When people needed food, when families needed help, they could turn to this church. So, I want to say, when you have a pastor who watches out for you not to spiritually, but materially, then you are truly blessed. Let's thank Pastor Harris for all he does.

[Applause]

Now, he's not alone in so many ways. He also has an amazing partner he walks through life with, and in her own right as spiritual leader. I also truly appreciate that she is a schoolteacher watching out for our kids, bringing them up the right way. Now, we have a saying at Gracie Mansion, this is very important. My wife, Chirlane, has laid down some rules at Gracie Mansion, and she thinks it's important that we throw away certain traditional phrases we used to use. There used to be a phrase, behind every great man stood a great woman. We don't say that anymore.

We say, beside every great man stands a great woman. That great woman is Reverend Valerie Harris. Thank you for all you do.

[Applause]

This is a place where people are encouraged to get involved in the community, to not be bystanders, but to be involved, engaged deciders. And you saw this amazing experience we had just weeks ago, where in the middle of pandemic people decided to get involved and showed up. They showed up to vote. Even when people said they wouldn't, people showed up. They showed up to make a difference. You could have forgiven someone for staying home during a pandemic. Instead, what did we see? The highest voting totals we had seen in a century, people cared. People made their voices heard.

[Applause]

That's why in a few weeks, I'm going to get to say these words, President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. Doesn't that sound good?

[Applause]

You did that. You did that – and millions around this country. And I say that because our involvement matters, our voices matter, and that is proven here. And we have another season of decision ahead next year. And there's someone I want to acknowledge who's done amazing work for the City of New York, amazing work side by side with me serving the people of this city, whether it was creating Pre-K or doing the work to protect people in communities, whatever the work was one of the people I had depended on was Harold Miller, and Harold is here with us today. Harold, please. I want to thank you for all you're doing. He's now playing a leading role in our Test and Trace Corps, making sure that we protect people from the coronavirus. So, this is a good young man. I hope you'll get to know him in the coming months. He has a lot he's done and a lot he will do ahead. Thank you, Harold.

Everyone, look, here's what I'm here to talk about very quickly. And, Pastor, thank you for the opportunity. What have we been through together? What have we been through? Less than a year ago we had never even heard of the word coronavirus, right? It wasn't part of our life. We were watching something thousands and thousands of miles away. It didn't seem like it would become an everyday word. It didn't seem like it would be something that would take our loved ones from us. And then in March and April, we were in a state of shock at how hard hit we were. We were the epicenter in this entire country. And a lot of people here know it because a lot of you were at the frontline fighting the coronavirus. Every one of you, a health care hero, essential worker, God bless you. Let's all thank the people here in this congregation who served and protected all New Yorkers, selflessly, powerfully, God bless you.

[Applause]

We would not have made it through without you. There were some people who don't believe in miracles, but I saw a miracle. I saw in March and April this city somehow overcome the coronavirus. I saw hospitals pushed to the brink, but they held. They held on because of our health care heroes. And then the miracle, the comeback. We were the epicenter. But by summer

we were the safest place in the United States of America. Right? You did that, everyone. You did that.

[Applause]

You socially distanced, you put on the mask, you did everything. We went from worst to first, or to make the parallel to scripture, “The first shall be last, and the last shall be first.” We lived it. We made it real. Now, yes, a challenge again, a second wave upon us. And we're scared. We're worried, all of us, but we have a faith that comes from experience because we fought back before, when it was even harder, we fought back, and we overcame. And you know when you fight something and overcome it once, you can do it again, you know it. You saw this city come back, you saw us do things that were supposed to be impossible. They said it was impossible to open our public schools again. Well guess what? Our schools are open again for our children. We made it happen. You made it happen.

[Applause]

They said we couldn't do it. And yet time after time after time, New York City proves, Queens proves, Hollis proves, that you can do these things because you're New Yorkers, because you have something special in you. You have a strength forged in the fire of this city. No doubt, tough place to live. We love it, but it makes you strong, doesn't it? It makes you strong. And now we look ahead, and we could look ahead with fear or we can look ahead with hope and I'm going to tell you why I look ahead with hope. Because we overcame that first wave, I have hope. Because we proved that people could look out for each other and protect each other, I have hope. Because a vaccine has arrived in New York City, I have hope.

[Applause]

I was listening to Pastor's powerful words, and they really reached me in my heart because at this moment, any one of us could look to what we have suffered, or we could look at the ways we've been delivered. We had an election that delivered us. It was not a sure thing, but we got the results that would save us. We had scientists all over the world trying to create that vaccine. There's never been this kind of effort in human history, a brand new disease, and a vaccine had to be created to protect all of us, and they did it in less than a year. That is remarkable. We were delivered again, a miracle again –

[Applause]

But now we have to take that vaccine and reach the people and end the coronavirus era once and for all. We can turn this page once and for all. But I want to speak from my heart about this vaccine because I know if there's anyone here who says, I have some questions, I have some doubts, maybe even some fears about the vaccine, I want to look you in the eye and say, that's okay, I respect that. And we owe it to you to answer every one of those questions, to dispel those fears, to hear those doubts and give you the evidence. And I'm going to start with the best evidence I have. When the doctors say, it's my turn to take the vaccine, you will see me there in public taking that vaccine to show my confidence. My family will take that vaccine. Our health care leadership will take that vaccine. All the people saying we believe in it, we will lead the way we will lead by example, because we know this has been tested and put through trials. And

there's been more scrutiny on this vaccine than any in history. It is safe. It is effective. It is fast and easy to receive. No different than when you've gotten vaccines in the past. We will provide it for free to the people of New York City, all over New York City. We will show you. My wife, Chirlane, always likes to say, don't tell me, show me. Don't tell me, show me. Can I get an amen?

[Applause]

We will show you. We will take the vaccine. We will show you how it makes people safe and allows us to turn the page. How we can cast out the coronavirus once and for all, I will not miss the day that the coronavirus was a part of our life. I will be very happy to say goodbye to the coronavirus, to have it be way in the background, way in our history. We can do that together in these next months.

I'll conclude with where we go from there. And I'll tell it to you this way. A lot of people are worried about the future, understandably, a lot of people worry about this city. Someone came up to me a few weeks ago, very from the heart and said, 'Mayor, I'm worried,' and said, 'well, will New York City ever regain its past glory?' I thought about it. I respected the question and I said, I'm sorry, my friend, that's the question because yes, this is an amazing place. We love this place. We love all the special things about New York City, but New York City was far from perfect before the pandemic. There were plenty of challenges and problems before the pandemic. The cost of living was too high before the pandemic. It cost too much money to get a place to live before the pandemic, people were not being given their fair share of wages before the pandemic, there was exclusion and discrimination and racism before the pandemic. We were not living in a wonderland. So, I don't want to regain our past glory if our past glory wasn't good enough. I don't want to go back to some nostalgia past that left out too many people. The question is not, how do we regain our passport but how do we reach our greater glory? How do we go someplace better? This is a moment of transformation.

[Applause]

We've been through pain, but our eyes have been opened more than ever before to what we must demand. And a lot of people who did not understand, now understand just how much disparity and unfairness must be addressed. In a crisis there is also the opportunity for transformation. But we've got to seize that moment together. And the key ingredient, as I look around, I am looking at the magic formula. It's you, it's you, it's you, it's you, it's New Yorkers. It's people of faith. It's people of strength and resiliency who do things that people think everywhere else are impossible, but we make it possible right here. That's who we are.

Everyone, I have tremendous faith in you and where we will go together. In this joyous season, if ever there was a time to think about redemption, to think about what we could build a new, this is the time, this Christmas season, this holiday season. So, I wish everyone peace and joy and hope. A Merry Christmas, a Happy Kwanzaa, a Happy New Year. 2020 will soon be over, and better times ahead. God bless you all. Thank you.

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