One of the issues we occasionally run into in life is that of someone not knowing when to stop. If you have ever read Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, you know what I am talking about. It’s a great book until about the last twenty-five pages when Twain decides he needs to go on and on about an overly complicated escape plan involving Huck and Tom Sawyer, that adds nothing to the story. But it is not just a problem in literature because this morning those who put lectionaries together have also decided to get in on the action. Today is Palm Sunday and so you would think the readings would be pretty straightforward. I mean even the un-churched could figure out that on Palm Sunday you should probably have readings that are about Palm Sunday. And we do, but we also have the readings for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. It seems the lectionary compilers either didn’t know when to stop or concluded, rather cynically, that no one would come for those services anyway so they might as well sneak those readings in too. But since I think the totality of today’s readings are a bit much I would like to briefly talk about this Sunday’s namesake. And in order to keep it short I am only going to look at the last bit of the reading from the start of the service known as the Liturgy of the Palms.

The setup is that Jesus has come into Jerusalem and the people are really excited. They throw down their cloaks and say, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” It must have been quite a sight. But because it is such a sight, it gets the pharisees grumpy and we read, “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, order your disciples to stop.’ He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.’" And what I want to take from this little snippet is how unnecessary we are and how extravagant God is.

Think for a moment about what Jesus is saying. Today, humanity is at its peak. In a few days this same crowd will be chanting crucify, however today they are on their game. They are acknowledging who Jesus is and reacting appropriately by worshiping and glorifying him. But even in this moment where we are at our best, what does Jesus tell the pharisees? He says that the best humanity has to offer could easily be replaced by a bag of rocks, that is what he means when he says that if the crowds went away “the stones would shout out.” As technology has grown many workers have found themselves replaced by computers or robots, but as far as I know there has never been an instance where someone was replaced by a slab of granite. And yet that is what Jesus tells the pharisees. Now, we could look at this and get a little depressed realizing that even at our best we are in a dead heat with the stuff Fred Flintstone moved around at the Slate Rock and Gravel Company. But there is another way to think about it. If you remember the famous football verse of John 3:16 it says, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.” Somehow for all of our problems and insignificance, God loved and does love us. In fact, he loves us so much that he sent his son to us. Jesus in saying we could be replaced with rocks is also acknowledging that we have not been replaced with rocks. We are important and significant because God has decided that we are. We have done no more to earn this extravagance than the rocks sitting on the side of the road, but this extravagance is ours nonetheless. That is the setup for this week. Much like the setup for Lent where we are told that we are dust. But the thing to never forget is that we are very important dust because God has declared it as such.

A lot happens this week and the compilers of the lectionary get a little ahead of themselves this day, but let’s stick with Palm Sunday for now. A day which reminds us of the proper reaction to God but also a day that shows just how extraordinary it is that we are even in a position to have a proper reaction to God. It is a reminder of how much God loves us and just how extraordinary it is that God became flesh and dwelt among us so that we may be his this day and forevermore.