

“Consider the Cross: Eternity’s Dividing Line” // Luke 23:1–26 // Easter 2025¹

Luke 24:1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3 They went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men (angels, of course) stood by them in dazzling clothes. 5 So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground. “Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” asked the men. 6 “He is not here, but he has risen! Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee, 7 saying, ‘It is necessary that the Son of Man be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and rise on the third day?’” 8 And they (were like, “Oh yeah...”) (and they) remembered his words.

One sentence, uttered by an angel, that changed the course of history: He is not here but he is risen, just like he said.

There is a tradition dating all the way back to the early church ... On Easter Sunday, the pastor would say, “Christ is risen” and the congregation would repeat: “He is risen indeed.” It’s pretty awesome to think about doing something that has almost 2,000 years of history behind it, right? So, can we do that right now, joining with 2,000 years of believers from nations all over the world?

Christ is risen!

¹ Works consulted: “Pilate, the Crowds, and Barabbas,” John Mark Comer; “With a Politician,” sermon by Tim Keller; Thabiti M. Anyabwire, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Luke*. And others as noted throughout.

He is risen indeed!

If you believe that, Summit Church, put your hands together right now!

And let me say, if **you’re one of those people who hasn’t been here since last Easter ... Well, first, welcome back. It’s good to see you again. Listen, I know** it can take a lot of courage to walk into a church, and I just want to say, “I’m glad you’re here.”

Second, I can **understand, if this is the only week you come, why** you may not feel compelled to come back on other weeks, because you’re like, “Every time I go, he preaches on the exact same thing. It’s always this Resurrection deal.”

Yeah, I get it. Listen, we **actually talk about a lot more throughout the year**—you should come check it out—but do understand that the **core of our faith is what we celebrate today**: that Christ **actually came**, just like all the prophecies said he would. **He actually lived, died, and resurrected** from the dead and was seen **alive** by hundreds of witnesses who went around the world proclaiming that he had risen, often at the cost of their lives.

At the **center of Christianity** is not a new perspective on life or a new moral code to live by, it’s not a new political agenda. At the center of Christianity is an empty tomb that literally changes everything. If Jesus didn’t actually rise from the dead, then Christianity is one religious perspective among many. But if he did, then everything has changed: Sins can be forgiven, death is not the end, and life can be made new. So that’s why this day is such a big deal.

I did hear about one young pastor (true story) who decided that if this was the only weekend a lot of people would come to church, he was just going to tell them everything they needed to know about

Christianity in one queen-mother-of-all sermons. He preached for 90 minutes. True story! The next year, Easter was the **lowest-attended** Sunday of the year.

So I'm not going to do that; I'm going to try to get right to the point: **LUKE 23, if you have your Bibles**. Luke 23 is the dividing line of history. If you've ever driven along the **Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina**, you might have seen a little sign that says "**Eastern Continental Divide**." It marks the ridge that divides the eastward and westward slopes of our continent. Every raindrop that falls on the eastern side of the divide flows down into the Atlantic Ocean; everything on the western side toward the Gulf of Mexico, or America, or whatever it's called now.

That means two **little raindrop friends**, conceived together in the same cloud, casually falling together from the sky, just chatting it up on the way down, can land a fraction of an inch apart, on either side of the divide, and end up on literally opposite sides of the planet.

Luke 23 marks that dividing line with humanity. In Luke 23 we meet five people (or groups of people) whose different responses to the cross literally divide them for eternity—some going on to everlasting life, and others to everlasting death. I'm going to call these **five people (or groups of people) our "PEOPLE of INTEREST."** You see, Luke records their stories for us **not just because they are part of the historical record**, but because *their* stories are emblematic of how all people, in all places and at all times, respond to Jesus.

You should be able to see your own response to Jesus in these stories, and where you see yourself in relation to them can **answer an important question** that perhaps you've had, the question of, "*How can you know for sure what will happen to you when you die?*" Maybe you've wondered that.

In fact, let me ask you a question I've asked lots of people—in airplanes and Uber rides and in crowds of people like this. Here's the question: On a scale of 0–10, with "0" meaning you're sure you're not, and "10" meaning you're sure you are, how sure are you that if you died, right now, that you'd go to heaven?

I want to tell you how you can be a "10" by the end of this message (or a "0")—simply by making sure you are on the right side of Jesus.

Luke 23, vs. 1: Then their whole assembly rose up and brought him before Pilate. 2 They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation, opposing payment of taxes to Caesar, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." 3 So Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

[13] Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, [14] and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him ... Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. [16] I will therefore punish (which means "whip" him) and release him."

POI #1: is Pilate: (and we'll call Pilate) The Preoccupied

You may recognize the name "Pilate," or as he's sometimes called, "Pontius Pilate." Pilate was the Roman governor over Jerusalem, and in order to execute Jesus, the Jewish leaders had to go through him. What we see here in Pilate is a certain ambivalence toward Jesus—Pilate won't really make a decision about him. Three different times in this chapter Pilate says that he thinks Jesus is innocent, but he can't bring himself to let him go. In **vs. 16 he says, "I'll punish him anyway by having him beaten and then let him go,"** which doesn't make any sense, of course: If he's innocent, he should go free; if he's guilty, he should be punished.

What we see in these verses is that (watch this) Pilate is **not actually concerned** with whether or not Jesus is the promised Jewish Messiah; he's mainly concerned with keeping the peace. You see, **historians tell us that at this point** in his career, Pilate was on pretty thin ice with Caesar. Several riots had broken out in Jerusalem under Pilate's watch, and Emperor Tiberius had told him, "Pilate, one more blow-up, and you're finished." In fact, we know that Pilate, just a few years after these events, lost his position as governor of Jerusalem because he'd **mishandled another disturbance** in Samaria, and as punishment he was banished to Gaul, where he later committed suicide.

The point is that Pilate was so PREOCCUPIED with earthly pressures that he didn't have time to consider a question like who Jesus actually was.

That's not rejection of Jesus; it's indifference to Jesus, and it's probably worse than outright rejection. You see, at least with rejection, you're thinking seriously about the question. With indifference, you're saying the question doesn't really even deserve your attention.

Pilate represents the husband too distracted by his career, too engulfed in the cares of this life to give serious thought to Jesus—he's focused on bills and parenting and getting things situated for his retirement. Pilate's the young lady so focused on getting ahead in school that church is just not a priority right now; he's the high school student so focused on sports and what his friends think that he never stops to ask, "What have I decided about Jesus?"

But it's crazy not to think about this question because one thing is for sure—we are all going to die someday, and on that day, the most important question will be what we decided about Jesus. The French philosopher Blaise Pascal famously said the most insane thing the human race does is to live as if death is not a sure and certain reality.

It would be like being on the Titanic after it hit the iceberg. You know, they say it was about an hour before people really knew they were in trouble. They just kept partying and having a good time while the ship was sinking. Imagine if you had been one of the few people who knew the ship was in dire trouble, certain to sink; you knew that everybody that was not on a lifeboat was going to die, but you said, "Ah, who's got time to think about that? This party is too much fun, this food is too good, this view is too beautiful, to disturb myself with those thoughts." That's crazy, because in about 30 minutes the only thing that's going to matter is if you're ready for what comes after the ship goes down.

A recent study from **UNC School of Medicine**, just released, shows that the death rate in America holds steady at 100 percent. It's crazy for you to be preoccupied in the face of a question so important.

Listen, friend: **DISTRACTION sends far more people to hell than disbelief ever did.**

Let's keep reading, because we're about to meet POI #2 in vs. 5:

After Pilate declares his belief that Jesus is innocent, **They [the chief priests] kept insisting, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he started even to here."** 6 When Pilate heard this, he asked if the man was a Galilean. 7 Finding that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in **Jerusalem during those days.** Pilate, who again, just wants to resolve this issue and move on, finds a loophole that gets him off the hook. He's like, "Oh, Jesus is a Galilean? This is my lucky day. That puts him in Herod's jurisdiction. I'll make Herod deal with him!"

So he sends Jesus to Herod, and vs. 8: **Herod was very glad to see Jesus; for a long time he had wanted to see him because he had heard about him and was hoping to see some miracle performed by him.** 9 **So he kept asking him questions, but Jesus did not answer him.**

POI #2: Herod: and we'll call him—**The Superficial**

This was the Herod who had had John the Baptist beheaded after John confronted him about having an affair with his sister-in-law. He's now curious about Jesus. This is like three years later, and now this Herod is curious about Jesus. He's heard people talking about Jesus and he wants to see Jesus do some miracle. Of course Herod is not really interested in pressing in too much with Jesus' teaching, because that would require reckoning with his messed-up life, dealing with things that Jesus says would have to change in his life—so he checks Jesus out, but he keeps him at arm's length. That's why I call Herod "the superficial."

Herod represents the person today who enjoys coming to church—he's into the Bible and spiritual things; he believes in prayer and even loves a lot of worship music, and he asks great questions—but he never really gets serious about Jesus because that would require too radical a life change. He's interested in Jesus, but only up to a point. He wants religion to be a part of his life, but he never wants to go on to full commitment. He's what we call a "fan" of Jesus, but not a "follower."

But here's the thing: coming to Jesus, knowing the truth about Jesus, requires a willingness for him to completely change your life and a willingness to follow him wherever he leads. Notice Luke says, **vs. 9**, that **Jesus never even answers Herod**. To the superficial and the merely curious, Jesus ... doesn't ... respond.

Jesus only reveals himself to those ready to follow him. And when I say follow, I mean ready to surrender their will and their pride and their trust to him.

Unfortunately, the word "follow" in our language has taken on different implications. For example, I've told you this, on social media, I follow **Andrew Huberman**. If you don't know, Huberman is a brilliant American neuroscientist who makes all these out-of-the-box health suggestions. Some of them are good and I follow them.

I put collagen powder in my coffee in the morning and take berberine supplements at night. But Huberman also recommends a number of things I *DON'T* do: like eating 100mg of lion's mane mushrooms every day, and delaying drinking any coffee until you've been up for at least two hours. He says that you should light the interior of your home exclusively with red party lights after 7 p.m., and that you sit outside in a bucket of ice water for at least 11 minutes a week.

I have no problem saying I "follow Andrew Huberman" and ignoring those recommendations. And maybe I shouldn't. Please don't send me any articles. I've read enough. But some of them I just don't want to do. I'm pretty sure he recommends "lion's mane mushrooms" just because the name sounds cool. I **want my coffee** ready when I open my eyes in the morning, and I don't want my home looking like a Miami nightclub at night. But the bottom line is, **I feel perfectly fine saying "I follow Huberman,"** and yet choosing not to follow those recommendations. My guess is that there are people in your life like that too—people that you say you follow, but you feel perfect freedom to pick and choose what you do and don't want to follow from them.

But see, it was different with Jesus. To follow him meant total submission of your will to his. Did you come to Jesus as a fan to learn about him—maybe to be influenced by him—or a follower ready to surrender everything to him?

Jesus has no answer for the superficial. He reveals himself only to those who seek him with all their hearts.

So, we've got **Pilate the Preoccupied** and **Herod the Superficial**. The third person of interest in these verses we meet in vs. 10: "The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him."

POI #3: The Chief Priests, and we'll call them: The Proud

The chief priests were proud people—they'd spent a lifetime distinguishing themselves from the masses—separating themselves, proving they were the *creme de la creme*, and Jesus repeatedly insulted that pride. Jesus had said, you see, that these religious leaders, despite their lofty status, were no better in God's eyes than any other sinner, and they needed to be forgiven just like the tax collectors and prostitutes did. And they hated Jesus for saying that. And not just a little, either—they "vehemently" (vs. 10) accused him. Their opposition to Jesus is the strongest of any group—because, see, when you've spent a whole lifetime trying to set yourself apart—to show you're better, and that you deserve good things, you HATE anyone who challenges that.

Listen: One of the things that you'll find as you read the Gospels—it's counter-intuitive for newcomers: **The greatest resistance to Jesus often comes from the religious community**, and from those who really seem to have their lives together, and that's because coming to Jesus requires **an abject humility and a total surrender** that most people, particularly proud, religious people, are unwilling to show.

You see, to come to Jesus, you've got to admit that there's nothing about you that makes you more worthy of God's grace than anybody else. The prophet Isaiah said that even on our best day, our righteousness to God is like a filthy, diseased rag—and the word Isaiah used indicated the kind of rag you'd have used to wrap a leper's open sores that became filled with blood and pus and all kinds of infectious bacteria. Imagine showing up to enter heaven dressed in filthy, bloody, pus-filled rags.

Our only hope is to cast ourselves completely and totally on God's grace and say, "I need mercy." But most people don't want to admit their total need of God's grace, because if they did, they'd have to lay down their whole lives in surrender to him. Instead, what they want to do is play church—focus on being good people who are respectable and go to church and obey the rules, and they feel fairly confident they'll get into heaven—as long as God grades on the curve, and surely he will, they think. Sure, they're not perfect, but surely they're in the upper 35 percent.

Listen, churches today are full of "chief priests." They are hard to spot, because they often serve in leadership positions in the church and they faithfully show up every week. They know every word to every song, but in their hearts they've never really reckoned with how sinful they are in God's eyes and surrendered themselves without condition or reservation to the mercy of Jesus.

Billy Graham famously said, "It's not most people's sins that will send them to hell; it's their good works, their false sense of righteousness."

So, we have the Preoccupied, the Superficial, and the Proud. In vs. 18, we see our fourth person of interest: Barabbas. Here's the setup to the Barabbas story. In vs. 18, Pilate's still trying to find a way to get out of his Jesus dilemma. Pilate knows Jesus is innocent, and he just wants to get things back to the status quo. So he has Jesus whipped and then says to the crowd, "Is that enough?" thinking surely they'll be mollified. But the crowd, now being manipulated by the chief priests, starts to shout back, "No, crucify Jesus! Crucify Jesus!" And they begin to chant that louder and louder, and Pilate doesn't know what to do ... but then—then, he has an idea. He REMEMBERS an old custom where on the Passover, the governor of Jerusalem releases one prisoner as a show of goodwill, and he thinks, "This is my way out!" So he goes into his prison and drags out the worst prisoner he

can find—this scoundrel Barabbas, a thief, a murderer, and he stands him up beside Jesus. Scholars say he would have been a domestic terrorist, a real menace to society; he'd harmed lots of people, including his fellow Jews. And so Pilate says to the crowd, "Which one shall I release to you?" thinking for sure they'll choose Jesus over this rapscallion Barabbas. But, vs. 18 They all cried out together, "Take this man away! Release Barabbas to us!"

POI #4 (is) Barabbas, who is: The Guilty

And here's where the story becomes really personal for me and you. You see, of all the people in the story, the one we're supposed to most identify with is Barabbas. You say, "But wait, J.D., I'm not a murderer or a ... rapscallion, or whatever word you said a moment ago." And that's probably true ... but the point is that Barabbas was rightfully condemned in his sin, as are we. For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; there is none righteous; no, not one.

Barabbas is **the first in a long line of people** who is going to be set free because Jesus died in his place. By the way, something interesting you should note about Barabbas' name: **In Aramaic, Barabbas is literally "son of a dad."** ("Bar = son of;" "Abba = a dad.") **Son of a dad.** Could you come up with a more generic name? This guy is just "the son of a dad" because he represents all of us.

Barabbas' story is my story. I'm the child of a human dad, and so are you. All of human history comes to a head in this one moment; we're seeing the entire fate of the human race epitomized in the story of one man.

One of the most interesting things about this trial is that at several points, Jesus remained silent as accusations were hurled against him.²

But why would Jesus stand silent in this trial, especially when it's obvious that this trial is a sham? It's obvious the charges against him are made up. Jesus wasn't a blasphemer or lawbreaker or terrorist like they were saying. So why didn't he speak up to defend himself?

Well, ask yourself this: **When you stand in a courtroom silent**, while others make **accusations against you**, and you say nothing in your defense, **what are you admitting?**

Guilt.

Jesus stood silently in the face of accusation because he was accepting guilt. You say, "But he wasn't guilty! Why would he plead guilty to charges he wasn't guilty of?"

It's because at that moment, behind the lying, hypocritical fingers of the chief priests and the religious leaders, Jesus perceived the righteous finger of God the Father pointing at him, accusing him of my sin. And Jesus stood silent before that accusation because he was pleading guilty ... to my sin.

This whole trial is about me. I was preoccupied, like Pilate—thinking more about daily trivialities than eternal realities. I was superficial, like Herod, more interested in what Jesus could do for me than what I owed to him. I was proud, like the chief priests, refusing to admit my utter and complete need of grace. All the profiles in this chapter are about me, and they come to a head in Barabbas—I am the guilty one.

It's like that old Negro spiritual said: *Were you there when they crucified my Lord?* The answer is YES, I was there—I was there in Pilate, I was there in Herod, I was there in the chief priests, and most of all, I was Barabbas. *Guilty, vile and helpless we, spotless lamb of God was he, full atonement, can it be? Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

² Check out Luke 23:5, 9. This is made even more explicit in other Gospels. This was a fulfillment of the prophecy made in Isa 53:7, that when he was accused he would "open not his mouth."

There's **ONE MORE individual, one more person** of interest I want to show you really quickly before we close: **Verse 26: As they led him away, they seized Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, and laid the cross on him to carry behind Jesus.**

POI #5: Simon the Cyrenian: *(We'll call him)* **The Disciple**

Quick question: Why do you think Luke tells us this man's name AND where he is from? I mean, I get it if Luke wants to tell us about the moment when the cross got so heavy that Jesus staggered under the weight of it—that helps us understand Jesus' suffering—but **why give us this man's name—and not just his name, but also where he was from? And, by the way, in Mark's account of this, Mark also mentions the names of Simon's two sons—Rufus and Alexander.** Why include all these personal details about Simon?

Scholars say **it's because Simon of Cyrene was known in the early church.** The first readers of Luke's book would have said, "Oh, Simon of CYRENE, the dad of Rufus and Alexander? I know him! I didn't realize he was there for all this!"

In fact, Paul ends his letter to the Romans this way: "Greet Rufus, who is chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me also."³ Scholars say it is almost certain that this is the same Rufus mentioned in Mark as the son of Simon of Cyrene.⁴ **That means Simon went on to become a follower of Jesus,** and not only that, he led his wife and **two sons to faith in Christ.**

³ Romans 16:13

⁴ Why else would Luke and Mark record their names? They didn't mention the names of other random people on the road—"The guard's name was Fred, and the one who hit Jesus was named Bob"—Luke and Mark record their names because they were well-known in the early church. Cf. William L. Lane, "The naming of Alexander and Rufus suggests that they were known to the readers of the Gospel. It is possible that they were Christians and active members of the church for whom Mark wrote." (NICNT: The Gospel of Mark, p. 565); R.T. France, "The mention of Alexander and Rufus... suggests that they were known to the audience, and probably members of the Christian community" (NIGTC: The Gospel of Mark, p. 642).

By the way, of the 26 people Paul greeted by name in Romans 16, Rufus is the only one Paul describes as "chosen in the Lord." That's a significant statement. Paul is saying that **on the road to Calvary, even as Jesus' body staggered under the weight of the cross,** Jesus still sovereignly chose a man to become his disciple.

It always gets me: in the worst, most painful moment of Jesus' life, he stopped to call a man to be his disciple. In 2008, tragedy struck the home of Steven Curtis Chapman, one of my generation's most famous Christian musicians. Steven's 17-year-old son was pulling their SUV back into their driveway and didn't notice when his 5-year-old sister suddenly darted out in front of it to greet him. The place, as you can imagine, descended into chaos. From the backyard, Steven heard his wife wailing and ran up to find her crumpled over the crushed body of their little girl. He said when he picked up his little daughter, he knew she wasn't going to make it. When the ambulance finally got there, and the EMTs took over, they put her in the back to rush her to the hospital, and Steven got into a police car to follow them, but as they pulled out, he noticed his 17-year-old son off to the side. In the chaos, everyone had forgotten about him, and he was lying there in a heap on the edge of the driveway, overwhelmed by grief and guilt; his older brother was literally laying over him, covering him. And Steven told the policeman: "Stop. Stop the car." He got out and he pointed at his son and said, "Will Franklin, your father loves you," and then they rushed on to the hospital. What always gets me is that here, in a father's worst moment of pain, he was thinking about the needs of his son: He wasn't blaming him; he was loving him.

Here, on the road to Calvary, in Jesus' worst moment of pain, he extends love to a man he came to save. He never stopped loving us.

And that leads to my last bit of good news. Simon of Cyrene's story is an invitation to you. You and I may indeed be guilty, but he's not blaming us. He stopped the car, so to speak, called your name and

said, “Your Father loves you.” That’s *his* voice that’s been stirring in your soul as I’ve been up here talking. He’s calling you—not just to pray a ritual prayer, but to follow him, to become his *disciple*, to carry his cross into the world and lead your family and friends to Jesus just like Simon did.

Have you picked up that cross? That’s the invitation to you today:
Consider the cross, and follow Jesus.

The events of this trial mark the dividing line of eternity. Two people who grow up together in the same community, the same church, in the same Bible study, in the same family, react differently to Jesus and end up *eternities* apart—one in everlasting paradise, the other in everlasting torment. The most important question you’ll ever consider is this: ***Which side of Jesus are you on?***

Which brings me back to the assurance question I presented at the beginning ... How sure are you on a scale of 0–10 that if you died, you’d go to heaven? You can know that you are a 10 if you are on the right side of Jesus. You say, “Well, what does that mean exactly?”

Well, **Romans 10:9–10** says it involves two things: ***Repentance and Faith***

Repentance means acknowledging that Jesus is Lord. That he is the unquestioned authority in your life. Listen, surrender is one of those things that has to be total for it to mean anything. If you’re going to follow Jesus, he has to be Lord of everything—where you go, what you do, who you date, what you believe—for surrender to mean everything. As we say, if he’s not Lord of all, he’s not Lord *at all*.

The other side of the coin is **faith**. Faith means believing that Jesus died in your place, that he bore the FULL punishment for your sin.

These two things, repentance and faith, are what it means to be on the right side of Jesus.

A few weeks ago I compared it to sitting down in a **CHAIR**: You either are or you aren’t. (SIT) You’re either surrendered to him, or (STAND) still in control of your life. You’re either trusting in him as your sin-bearer, or you’re trusting that you can be good enough to earn heaven.

If you’re seated in him, then the answer to the question of how sure you are that if you died, you’d go to heaven can be “10.” If not, you can be sure it’s a “0.”

You see, right now, if you asked me on a scale of 0–10 how sure I am that if I died I would go to heaven, I’d say “10.” And that’s not because I think I’ve lived such a good life that I deserve it—quite the opposite. It’s because I recognize, like Barabbas, that Jesus died in my place, and I’ve put my trust in him. And when I get to heaven, if an angel stops me at the gate (if that’s how it works) and asks, “Hey, why should we let you in here? We know lots of things you did that would make you unfit for here,” I’ll point down on earth to that cross, and say, “But there, Jesus paid the full measure of my penalty; he died in my place, and because he did, there’s no penalty left for me!” And if the angel says to one of his associates, “I don’t know—someone go and get the book that contains all J.D.’s sins; we better review it to see what he missed,” and he sends an angel down to the heavenly record room to get the book of my sins, the angel will come back from that records room and say, “There is no more book. God the Father threw the book at Jesus, so there’s not one page with one sin left for J.D. to account for.” I won’t show up to the banquet of heaven dressed in the filthy leper’s rags of my own righteousness; I’ll be dressed in a spotless robe, washed white by the blood of the Lamb.

This is all because when I was 16 years old, I “sat down” in the chair of Jesus. What about you? You see, you can “sit down” in him today too, if you never have. In fact, I want to give you a chance to do that right now.

Every head bowed, every eye closed ... “Jesus, I believe you are Lord and I surrender to you. Jesus, I believe you died for my sin, and I receive you as my Savior. Thank you for saving me.” If you prayed that prayer with me, raise your hand. **Text READY to 33933.**

Summit, put your hands together for people all over the Triangle who are right now putting their faith in Jesus.

OK, I want everyone to stand. We’re going to end our service singing a song together, at all campuses, that was written by our Summit worship team, called “Consider the Cross.” But let me tell you one quick story that I heard this week before we do:

The first time we sang that song together was two years ago at Easter. In the congregation that day at our Garner campus was a first time guest named Elliot. He’d just been in a pretty severe motorcycle accident; the doctors were shocked he’d survived. He’d been in the hospital for more than a week, and when he got out, **someone invited him to come to Summit Church** on Easter Sunday, 2023. He told us later that while he’d been in the hospital, he’d had a dream in which God told him that he needed to turn his life around. Of course, the member who invited him didn’t know that; they were just being obedient to the prompting of the Spirit, but when Elliot came that Easter Sunday, he heard the gospel and responded. Here’s what he

said: “I’ll never forget when we sang together ‘Consider the Cross.’ This song,” he said, “led me to tears for the first time in over 15 years.” He realized that this gospel was an invitation to him, and that Easter Sunday two years ago, he gave his life to Jesus. He was still so messed up from the motorcycle accident that he couldn’t even walk down the aisle when the invitation was given! Fast forward two years, he now is in our Summit Worship residency, exploring a call to ministry, and he led this song on stage at the Knightdale campus.

He says, “This was not only the song that brought me to Christ; it has stirred me up to become the man God made me to be. It revealed Jesus to me and stirred up the gifts of the Spirit in me.”

So I want us all to stand together and sing this song together, can we? The cross is the dividing line of history! Those who embrace it, Jesus takes onward into eternal life—life with him. Consider the cross!

