* **Apostles Creed**
* **Weekender recognition**
* **Series Slide**
* You probably don’t know the name Mike Posner, and there’s a good chance you wouldn’t recognize him if I showed you his face.
* And for the first 6 years of Mike’s music career…that fact crippled him.
* But for the last 5 years, Mike has embraced the anonymity of a life without a spotlight or a stage.
* ….and ironically- that’s given Mike Posner a brighter spotlight and bigger stage.
* Let me take you on a brief tour of the last decade of Mike’s life.
* In 2010, Mike graduated with a 3.6 GPA from Duke University and released his first studio album with the instant hit “Cooler than Me”- a song he originally recorded in a dorm room. It rose to number 6 on the Billboard Charts and was a worldwide hit that landed him big time concerts and television gigs.
* Mike said, “I wrapped my identity up in being young, rich, and famous.” He said that his life goals at the time were to “Stay popular and stay relevant.”
* But the next couple of tries at albums didn’t go well for Mike. He sold less and less of his music, and so the record label shelved him. The money stopped and he plummeted out of the limelight.
* Mike was scared. And alone.
* It seemed his music career was dead- he was a one hit wonder.
* At just 23 years old, he felt like the best part of his life was now behind him.
* But Mike decided his purpose in making music shouldn’t be to be liked or popular, rather he needed to make music because it was in him. And it needed to come out. He was an artist, and needed to create.
* So he read some books and he learned that an **artist’s job is to take on suffering- and make art out of it to help other people.**
* He realized that he was using his **art to serve himself, while he should have been using it to serve others.**
* So he did 2 things.
* First, he started what he called a “Ninja Tour”.
* There are no tickets, no exchange of money, no merch or t-shirts for sale, no lights or sound system, no green rooms or opening acts. He just shows up in places around the country, tweets or Instagrams out his location…and then fans show up to hear his music.
* In his early concerts with the record label, there was always a back door to escape the fans. Now, he was meeting every single person after the show and hearing their stories. He said, “**when you have a microphone in front of your face, you feel compelled to speak. But on the Ninja tour, I had to listen.”**
* He started to crave a simpler life. So he made a second big life change. He sold his Porsche and bought a creepy old Dodge van. And whatever wouldn’t fit in that van…he donated.
* He went to Utah. Grew a Beard. And went off the grid for 6 months.
* During that time, he began to feel grateful and blessed…and content.
* And he wondered- **“Would I still feel that way if I went back into the spotlight?”**
* It was about that time that a friend got a message to him. A slow acoustic guitar ballad he had recently released had been picked up by an Electronic Dance DJ who remixed it…and it was now #1 in Norway and climbing the charts all over the world.
* That song- called **“I Took a Pill in Ibiza”** –is a denunciation of drugs and the club scene…and an exposé of the lie of fame and celebrity. Ironically, people all over the world were now dancing to it in clubs as they took hits of ecstasy.
* In it Mike writes this line “**I’m just a singer, who already blew his shot…”**
* Ironically, the writing of that lyric…is what actually gave Mike Posner another shot as a singer.
* Then, just as Mike was enjoying the re-birth of his career, his Father died in 2017. Then, in 2018, 2 of his friends in the music business each died from an overdose…one suicide, the other accidental.
* In response to those deaths, Mike had a new urgency to life.

A desire to live life to the fullest.

So, in 2019. Mike Posner decided to walk across America. Almost 3,000 miles.

He started with his feet in the Atlantic ocean near Asbury Park, NJ.

Then, when Mike got to Colorado, he was bitten by a rattlesnake and had to be life-flighted by helicopter to the hospital. While on the phone with the 911 operator he asked, “Am I going to survive?” to which the operator replied, “I’m not sure, sir.”

The venom caused him temporary paralysis in his legs, and he had to learn to walk.

After a 3 week detour- he finished his physical therapy, and was back on his feet. He drove back to the very spot in Colorado where the rattle snake bit him, and he stated his walk again.

In October of this last year, Mike reached the LA beaches, and in a tearful and triumphant moment…he dove into the Pacific ocean. The end of a 2800 mile journey.

* He was asked after the walk what he learned.
* He said-
* **“I have to go through pain to find real strength. I spent the first 30 years of my life trying to make [life] as comfortable as possible. But the peace of mind and security I was looking for was on the other side of suffering. We spend our lives trying to be comfortable all the time, and before we know it, we’re living a very small life.”- Mike Posner**
* His failure as a musician and that rattlesnake bite on his cross country trek have something in common. Both seemed to be detours from what he was trying to accomplish at the time, both made his life less comfortable, but each one ended up making his journey meaningful.
* **Title Slide- “Beginnings Always Hide Themselves in Ends: How to Die Before You Live”- John 12**
* We’ve come to the midway point of John’s gospel. Up to this point, Jesus’ popularity has been growing. Every time he’s in a precarious situation with people threatening his life, he always assures his disciples “My Hour has not yet come”…in other words- its not time for me to die.
* But today, for the first time in this book, Jesus is going to say the opposite. He’s going to say, “My Hour is here.” Its my time to die. His popularity is fading rapidly. He will soon be on his way into a garden for an intense night of prayer where he’ll sweat blood. Then he will be arrested. Beaten and crucified.
* He’s gonna take one heck of a snake bite. In so many ways, this looks and feels like the end for Jesus. It looks like the end of brilliant teaching career. It looks like a wasted life to his disciples. Yet, as Mike Posner writes in one of his songs- **Beginnings Always Hide Themselves in Ends.**
* **John 12:1-7**
* **Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead.**
* **2 So they gave a dinner for him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him. 3 Then Mary took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus’s feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.**
* **4 Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot (who was about to betray him), said, 5 “Why wasn’t this perfume sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor? ” 6 He didn’t say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it.**
* **7 Jesus answered, “Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of my burial. 8 For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”**
* **John 12:20-33**
* **20 Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival. 21 So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.**
* **23 Jesus replied to them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. 25 The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me. Where I am, there my servant also will be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.**
* **27 “Now my soul is troubled. What should I say ​— ​Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name.”**
* **Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”**
* **29 The crowd standing there heard it and said it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”**
* **30 Jesus responded, “This voice came, not for me, but for you. 31 Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 As for me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to indicate what kind of death he was about to die.**
* Transition: When Mike Posner finished his Walk across America, he released a song called “Live Before I Die”.
* The idea behind the song is that he realized from the death of his father and his friends, that we all have a finite amount of time in our lives that we waste…instead of getting out there and “living life”.
* So Mike Posner’s mantra, now, is to be present. Live in the moment. Do the thing you’ve always put off.
* And there are some tenets of that idea that I think are very good.
* But here’s the problem with “LIVE BEFORE I DIE”.
* That whole YOLO doesn't just support walks across America or going skydiving. A “LIVE BEFORE I DIE” philosophy can also send someone into the kind of lifestyle that Mike Posner now denounces.

“Live before I die” is easily translated into “I need to party- I’m only young once- now is the time to go clubbing, sleep with as many people as I can, live to be popular and relevant, drink myself into a coma.”

* There has to be something more to life than just EXPERIENCING EVERYTHING or BEING PRESENT.
* I think Mike Posner knows this. That’s what he learned from his plunge from popularity to obscurity.
* He realized he had been using his gift all wrong. He had been using his art to serve himself, instead of serving other people.
* Living an adventurous life on a razor’s edge might make you interesting…but it doesn’t make you beautiful.
* That’s what I want to show you about Jesus and what it means to be a follower of Jesus today.
* **1) Dying before you live is the best way to live before you die.** 
  + I’ve already pointed out to you in John 12 that Jesus is rounding a very significant corner here, heading into the homestretch toward his crucifixion.
  + He has just raised Lazarus from the dead, which was the final straw in the Pharisees decision to set him up to be arrested and killed for heresy and treason. Jesus’ life was too big a threat to the Pharisees staying popular and relevant.
  + So, now, with a target on his back, Jesus has just entered very publically into Jerusalem.
  + **V 23 & 27**
  + That’s why he now has switched his language to saying, “His hour has come”
  + And note, Jesus isn’t really happy about this. Remember when he raised Lazarus?- even though he knew when Lazarus died that he was going to resurrect him, Jesus still wept. He still was deeply moved.
  + Likewise, here he says, “My soul is troubled.”
  + Think about that for just a minute.
  + Jesus isn’t just living for the present.
  + He isn’t just trying to maximize pleasure or get the best feeling out of life for the moment.
  + That’s why he says- in response to his soul being troubled- “what should I say?- Father save me from this hour?- and then note he moves back to his purpose- But how can I can say that when I know that my whole purpose is to die on a cross?
  + In other words, Jesus has to look past the way he feels in the present- and look towards what his purpose is.
  + And fulfilling that purpose, he knows, will REALLY be living.
  + If Jesus simply lives in the present moment- he’s going to bail on his mission. His soul is troubled. His only question will be, HOW DO I LIVE BEFORE I DIE…How do get out of this and preserve myself…instead of…FOR WHAT PURPOSE AM I HERE?”
  + **V24-25**
  + Jesus gives this short analogy here to illustrate that.
  + He says, “You know this is how God has made the world. Take a look at the way grain works. Unless a grain of wheat lets itself fall off of the stalk and into the ground. Unless that grain of wheat sinks into the soil, dead… it remains alone. By itself. By clinging to the stalk. BUT…if that grain will let itself die…it will produce LIFE. It will multiply itself.”
  + Think about that grain idea for a second. Can you imagine if Grain just decided to live life in the present moment- with no regard for the way life actually works. It would hold onto to that grain stalk and say, “HECK NO- I’m not falling off the stalk. This stalk is all there is. Once you fall off the stalk- there’s nothing left. I’m going to squeeze every moment of life I can out of this stalk.” And indeed, that little grain would be alone…on that stalk…preserving itself…but ironically, actually keeping itself from new life…and its real purpose- to produce fruit.
  + Your life is a seed. God created you like an artist…whose goal and purpose is to take on suffering…and turn it into something that serves other people.
  + Beginnings Always HIDE THEMSELVES IN ENDS.
  + See, the way to live the good life…the way to start living the ETERNAL LIFE Jesus is offering to you…is to believe him…and follow him in this pattern. To believe that if you try to make this life all about your self- “Staying Popular and Relevant”. If you make your life about NOT TROUBLING YOUR SOUL- you will lose your life. You will only find the sort of despair that Mike Posner found when he wrapped his soul up in the popularity of his music.
  + **V 26-27**
  + But, Jesus says…the way to REALLY LIVE- is to follow me. My soul is troubled- I am headed to death. But I’m not asking the Father to save me FROM IT…because I know he has saved me FOR IT.
  + Following Jesus like this…serving Jesus by giving your life away to serve others will trouble your soul. But…
  + It's a bright sadness.
  + It's a sober happiness.
  + It doesn’t pretend that pain doesn’t exist. It doesn’t act like death isn’t real.
  + BUT IT ALSO knows that there is something better than death….there is something after death. And there is a way to start dying now…to give your life away…that actually is the way to experience the fullness of life.
  + Following Jesus means you know the only truly deep lasting eternal happiness we experience now…is all tied up not being served…but in serving God and others.
* **Back to 1)**
* **Transition:** At the start of this chapter there was a little scene with Lazarus’ sister Mary, anointing Jesus’ feet with perfume and then wiping it with her hair. This serves as a beautiful example of what someone who is dying before they live…and to do this…Mary had to have something we all need.
* **2) To live the Good Life in the present, you need a “Keep Going” soundtrack to help you Remember and Wait.**
  + We’d all live very differently if we could constantly hear a soundtrack playing to our lives.
  + Think about it.
  + If the people in movies could hear the soundtracks that we could hear…they would make a lot of different choices.
  + Those people in horror movies would NOT go down that hallway and open that door when the really creepy music started playing.
  + Or- can you imagine walking into work every day with “Eye of the Tiger” playing? (IDK, maybe some of you actually do that). You might not be the boss, but you feel like a boss.
  + Mike Posner made a soundtrack for his walk across America.
  + It's a 52 minute mixtape of songs and personal encouraging messages from friends.
  + He released the album in the middle of his Walk. This is what he says in the track that opens the mixtape.
  + **“By the time you hear this, I’ll be in the middle of the hardest journey of my life. I’ll be walking from the Atlantic ocean to the pacific ocean. I will not fail. I created this mixtape to remind myself who I am, when things get hard. I hope they can provide you the same strength.”- Mike Posner, Keep Going**
  + The name of the record is “Keep Going”- because that is the purpose of the songs…to tell Mike to KEEP GOING- when it gets hard. To reorient his mind from THE PRESENT pain he feels onto the BIGGER PURPOSE he is called to.
  + If you are going to live the “grain of wheat” life of dying before you live…you’ve got to have a Keep Going mixtape.
  + For the last 13 years, I’ve called this soundtrack to my life “REMEMBER AND WAIT”. It has carried me through my own failed leadership, its carried me through a broken marriage, and through the death of my son…just to name a few particularly difficult moments.
  + First, let me show it to you as God the Father speaks to Jesus here.
  + **v 27-28**
  + Take a look at what the Father says, and when he says it.
  + The Father speaks just after Jesus says, “My soul is troubled” yet still says, “This is my purpose. To die. And then he prays “Father, glorify your name. Which is what Jesus’ purpose is in dying. TO DISPLAY THE DEEP LOVE OF GOD the FATHER for humanity thereby allowing us to see God as more important…and more beautiful to us.”
  + This is a reassuring phrase, not only to Jesus, but Jesus also in v 30, to all those listening.
  + And look where the Father points.
  + He points BACKWARDS- to the past…and forward to the FUTURE.
  + He gives both a reminder of the way he has acted in the past…and he gives a promise to the way he will consistently act in the future.
  + **REMEMBER-** I have glorified my name…I’ve done this over and over and over…I’ve always been faithful to act according my character…my love and compassion and justice and beauty.
  + And he also says **WAIT**- I’m going to glorify my name. I KEEP MY PROMISES and I’m MAKING ANOTHER ONE. This act that troubles your soul, this death…you can be assured…I will make it accomplish its purpose.
  + OK, so there is the pattern. If you want a soundtrack to your life…you have to learn to REMEMBER AND WAIT. You have to be able to cue up the mixtape in your mind to think back to God’s faithfulness in the past and his promise for our future.
  + Now, lets look at 2 test cases- Mary and Judas.
  + **V 3**
  + At this dinner, Mary pours very expensive perfume on Jesus’ feet and wipes his feet with her hair.
  + Mark’s account of this tell us that she actually breaks the jar that its in- to pour all of it out.
  + This perfume is likely the most expensive thing that Mary and Martha and Lazarus own. It is, basically, their savings account. When she dumps this out, she is putting all of her chips on Jesus. She is saying “EVERYTHING YOU ARE…is worth EVERYTHING I HAVE.”
  + Two other things here.
  + Mary is wiping Jesus feet…which is the lowest, most disgusting job a servant can do. It was a very insulting job.
  + Like Mike Posner leaving LA and moving to the mountains to go into obscurity…this is social suicide for Mary.
  + On top of that…she lets down her hair.
  + Letting down your hair in public in this time is the social equivalent of a woman buying a mini-mini-mini skirt and standing on the corner of a city’s redlight district.
  + It is an intimate act that was only reserved for the most private of settings and closest of people.
  + It is another act of social suicide.
  + Mary is dying here.
  + She is giving away her future and security to honor Jesus.
  + She is giving away her social status to serve Jesus.
  + She is giving away her public dignity…to be close and intimate with Jesus.
  + She is a grain of wheat falling to the earth as she worships the Son of God.
  + Why and How is she doing this?
  + I think- its because Mary has a mixtape. She’s got a soundtrack playing.
  + She is remembering and waiting.
  + First, she has just seen Jesus raise her brother from the dead.
  + She was there and heard his voice say LAZARUS COME OUT!
  + She likely has talked with her sister about Jesus words “I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE, HE THAT BELIEVES IN MY, THOUGH HE DIE. YET SHALL HE LIVE.”
  + Beginnings Always Find Themselves In Ends.
  + I Just want to die before I live.
  + But, Mary was also very tuned into what Jesus taught. She didn’t just remember what he had done…she was paying attention to the promises he made.
  + **Luke 10:39**
  + There is a story in Luke’s gospel about Mary on another occasion when Jesus was visiting. And Luke says that while Martha was busy serving food and cleaning dishes, Mary was sitting at Jesus feet.
  + TO sit at a Rabbi’s feet meant to listen to his teaching.
  + So Mary is sitting soaking up what Jesus is saying…and Martha complains and thinks Jesus will side with her and tell Martha to get up and get busy.
  + **Luke 10:41-42**
  + But Jesus scolds Martha and says, “Mary has made the right choice. She has chosen to sit at my feet and she is receiving something that she cannot lose from this. Those dishes will get dirty again. Another meal will need to be prepared eventually. BUT I AM WITH YOU RIGHT NOW…and I HAVE THE WORDS OF LIFE. SO your sister has made the right choice.”
  + And when Jesus taught…what did he teach?
  + He taught about God’s Kingdom. He taught about how God was brining his Kingdom and what that future kingdom would be like and how to participate in that Beautiful kingdom now.
* **Back to 2)**
  + So now Mary, when she gives everything she’s got to honor, and worship, and have an intimate relationship with JESUS…she is thinking about the promises Jesus has made about the Kingdom of God. The beautiful future.
  + **John 12:4-6**
  + But Judas has no such soundtrack.
  + He’s been with Jesus for almost 3 years…but he hasn’t really sat at Jesus’ feet.
  + He’s been busy…pretending to serve.
  + And Judas, who John points out will not give Jesus anything…he only wants to take from Jesus, to steal from the poor, rather than serve them…and to preserve his own life…Judas is the anti-Mary.
  + He is the grain of wheat hanging on to the stalk.
  + He doesn’t understand the counterintuivte nature that you have to die before you live…and that beginnings always find themselves in ends.
  + He is only living to preserve himself in the present.
  + He has forgotten everything Jesus did…he can’t remember.
  + He has forgotten everything Jesus promised…he has nothing to wait for.
  + His life is “GET WHAT YOU CAN NOW! ONLY KEEP PEOPLE AROUND THAT BENEFIT YOU! Take a pill in abiza, to show Avicii you were cool. Stay popular! Stay Relevant!”
  + Judas didn’t have a Keep Going mixtape. He had no Remember and Wait Soundtrack…and he remained alone.
* **Back to 2)**
  + Mike Posner listened over and over and over to that 52 minute Keep Going mixtape on his walk across America.
  + And it was key, when he got bit by that rattlesnake. A perfect understandable reasonable excuse to stop walking. To go home. To quit.
  + But he was accountable to all those people that had watched his journey.
  + And, he was reminded from NJ to Colorado…over and over…about who he was…and what his purpose was he needed to accomplish.
  + So- here’s a really practical question?
  + How exactly to you make a Keep Going mixtape? How do you start a Remember and Wait soundtrack.
  + Well, you learn what JESUS HAS DONE…and you learn what JESUS PROMISES to do and you focus on that.
  + Making it really concrete- this is the way I do it (PRACTICE)
    - READ THE BIBLE- Meditate on it
    - JOURNALING
    - READ BOOKS- that remind me of truth (website book update)
    - KEEP A WEB OF DEEP RELATIONSHIPS IN MY LIFE (community group is a start)
    - AND OF COURSE- keep repeating the pattern where I give myself away and see the goodness of God.

**3) Jesus’ end is our new beginning. He is who we Remember and Wait for.**

Mike Posner has a video on Youtube called “DRAW MY LIFE 2”.

It's the story of the rise of his music career, then his fall…and now his commitment to a new way of life.

That he summarizes like this

* **Most of my life, … I’ve set a goal and worked like mad to get there, but always feel like something is wrong until I get there. So I need to find a way to be in love with where I’m at, in love with being perfectly incomplete.”- Mike Posner**

Mike is acknowledging there that he has had to become okay with being incomplete. Unfinished. Broken.

But that is not the extent of what we’re called to be. God’s purpose is to heal the world. To make us whole.

While we suffer now, this will not be forever.

No walk across America can complete us. No amount of serving others can complete us. No good work can make up for our ongoing selfishness…for the way we have sinned against God and others.

Only God can complete us.

**V 31-33**

* That's what Jesus is talking about when he says “The ruler of this world will be cast out.”
* That's a funny phrase. Its kind of ironic. After all, God is the ruler of the world…but why would GOD be cast out?
* Well, Jesus is talking about the devil here. He’s referring to the satanic ideas that govern the world…and have trashed the world…as humans rebelled against God.
* The every man for himself, this is all about me staying cool and popular and just getting as much as I can from the moment, regardless of who it hurts.
* He’s saying the world is ruled by that snake in the garden who tempted Adam and Eve to believe they could be God’s themselves.
* That was the wrong soundtrack. It only resulted in the brokenness of humanity and a curse for the world.
* But God made a promise for us to wait for.
* He promised that his son would be bit by a snake on the heel.
* God himself would incarnate, become flesh, and walk in the dust…his feet would get dirty and need to be washed. And, like Mike Posner- his walk would be interrupted, so it seemed, by a snake bite.
* The snake would bite his heel, God promised, but this son would crush the head of that rattlesnake.
* He would reverse the curse of sin. He would complete our incompleteness. By his death, his suffering, his falling off the stalk and into the ground…that we would be the living fruit of his death.
* That's why he says, “if I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself. I will cast out the ruler of this world.”
* He’s talking about his death. The cross. He would be lifted up and crucified and in that beautiful act. In that death. In that end…we would all find a new beginning.
* Because there, the true Ruler of the world was dying alone. He was being cast out- So that we could be made whole by God’s love. So that we would not remain alone.
* Jesus was taking what we deserved, to give us the relationship with his Father that only he deserves.
* And in his resurrection on the 3rd day, he was starting the process of making the world new.
* Beginnings always hide themselves in ends.
* I just want to die before I live.
* See, Mike Posner doesn’t yet understand Jesus like this, but he’s searching. He’s crying out, even in that walk across America…for something…someone to complete him.
* That’s why at the end of that Youtube Video Mike Posner says-
* **“Dear God, GIVE ME YOUR LOVE”**
* To which the Father, replies through Jesus-
* “Mike, I have loved you…and I’ll love you again.”
* Remember and Wait.
* Take heart, dear children of God, Beginnings Always Hide Themselves in Ends.