

American Idol Puts Spotlight on Jesus With Easter Special

American Idol used its prime-time TV program on Easter Sunday to put the focus clearly on Jesus Christ.

The “Top 24” hopeful contestants, judges Lionel Richie, Luke Bryan, and Carrie Underwood along with 17-time Grammy Award-winner CeCe Winans, five-time Grammy Award-winner Brandon Lake, Grammy Award-nominated Jelly Roll, all gave glory to God on Easter Sunday.

Richie kicked off the three-hour “Songs of Faith” special with his 2009 inspirational song “Eternity.”

Then, 17-year-old aspiring preacher, Canaan James Hill, took the stage and delivered a rousing rendition of “Better Days” by gospel singer Le’Andria Johnson.

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The content creator wowed the judges during the opening auditions with his soulful rendition of Earnest Pugh’s gospel song “I Need Your Glory.”

Richie, Carrie Underwood, and Luke Bryan were amazed as he sang the gospel song. They awarded Hill one of three platinum tickets, which allowed him to bypass the first round in Hollywood.

“That was something so spectacular, I just can’t even describe what I heard,” Richie added.

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One of Sunday night’s biggest performances was by worship artist Brandon Lake and Grammy-nominated artist Jelly Roll,

who is currently serving as the show's first-ever "Artist In Residence." The pair teamed up to perform their collaborative track "Hard Fought Hallelujah."

The performance was met by applause from the crowd and a standing ovation from the judges.

Lake admitted to the judges that he was always afraid to audition for Idol, but felt it was an honor to be on the stage.

"I've been waiting for this day," Lake said, adding, "I can't tell you how nerve-wracking it is to be in front of your, like, heroes. It's absolutely insane."

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"Hard Fought Hallelujah" was first released as a solo track by Lake in November 2024, Music Mayhem Magazine reports. He later asked Jelly Roll to join on the track.

"Collaborating with Jelly Roll on Hard Fought Hallelujah was powerful because we both understand what it's like to walk through battles and still choose to lift a song of hope," Lake previously shared.

"My prayer is that this song reminds people not to give up—that even in the hardest seasons, there's growth, purpose, and a victory worth singing about," Jelly Roll added. "Working with Brandon was an incredible experience. This track touched my soul like few others. 'Hard Fought Hallelujah' is a song that will echo through my home for years to come."

Gospel music icon Cece Winans later took the stage to perform her song "Come Jesus Come," with former American Idol contestant Roman Collins.

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