

BIOGRAPHY: BILLY GRAHAM

(1918 – 2018)

Saturday, October 18

Matthew 4:19 *Then [Jesus] said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

On September 14, 2001, Billy Graham stood in front of a large crowd at Washington D.C.'s National Cathedral. America was still reeling from the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that killed almost 3000 people a few days earlier. While speaking words of comfort to the nation, Dr. Graham did what he is best known for – pointing people to Jesus Christ. He spoke these words during his message.¹

"This event reminds us of the brevity and the uncertainty of life. We never know when we too will be called into eternity. I doubt if those people who got on those planes or who walked into the World Trade Center or the Pentagon on Tuesday thought that it would be the last day of their lives. And that's why we each must face our own spiritual need and commit ourselves to God and His will. Here in this majestic National Cathedral, we see all around us the symbol of the cross. For the Christian, the cross tells us that God understands our sin and our suffering, for He took them upon Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ. From the cross God declares, "I love you. I know the heartaches and the sorrows and the pain that you feel. But I love you." The story does not end with the cross, for Easter points us beyond the tragedy of the cross to the empty tomb. It tells us that there is hope for eternal life, for Christ has conquered evil and death and hell. Yes, there is hope."

Billy Graham² grew up on a dairy farm in North Carolina. As a teenager he accepted Christ as his Savior at a revival meeting. While a student at Wheaton College in Illinois he met his wife Ruth Bell, the daughter of a missionary surgeon. After college, he pastored a church in Western Springs, Illinois for a short time. But God had other plans.

Graham joined the newly formed Youth for Christ organization as their first paid employee. It was here that he began holding crusades to reach people with the gospel. In 1949 at the age of 30, Graham and his team set up a tent on the corner of Washington Boulevard and Hill Street in Los Angeles for a scheduled 3-week crusade. The "Canvas Cathedral" was filled to overflowing every night and the meetings extended to 8 weeks. This brought Graham into the national spotlight.

During his ministry Bill Graham shared the gospel with nearly 215 million people in over 135 countries. He is best known for his crusades but he also used television, radio, film, and publishing to share Christ. He founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950 which still works to spread the gospel today. He was a spiritual advisor to presidents and sought after by celebrities. But he didn't let the popularity take his focus off the main purpose – sharing the gospel. He once said, "The message I preach hasn't changed. Circumstances have changed. Problems have changed, but deep inside man has not changed, and the gospel hasn't changed."³

We cannot all be 'Billy Gramahs' but we can all share the message of Christ with those around us. What are you doing to get the gospel to people today?

¹ Read the full message @ <https://billygraham.org/story/a-day-to-remember-a-day-of-victory/>

² <https://billygraham.org/about/biographies/billy-graham/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Graham / Alton Gansky. 60 People Who Shaped the Church, p. 303-308

³ <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/inspiring-quotes/40-courageous-quotes-from-evangelist-billy-graham.html>