

## He's Home

*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life. God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17, CEB)*

I wasn't completely sure what I would write about for this week's devotion until I heard about the death of Rev. Billy Graham on Wednesday. So many tributes have already been written about his life that I'm not really sure what I can say that hasn't already been said. Even so, it's difficult to ignore the life of the person who may have had the greatest evangelistic influence on our nation during the past century.

I never had a chance to be part of one of his rallies in person, but like so many people, I was influenced by what I heard him say on broadcast TV. So why is it that Billy Graham seemed to be so widely admired and respected? After all, he had the ear of presidents and common people alike. Hardly a bad thing was spoken about his life, even though he shared such a weighty message.

Was he perfect? Hardly. He was just as human as you and me. But he worked extremely hard to protect his own personal integrity and the reputation of his ministry. Somehow, in his dealings with political leaders, he seemed to stay above the often poisonous politics of liberal and conservative.

He had one clear focus and he went after it day by day by day. That task was to rescue the souls of men, women, and children by preaching a simple, yet profound message of salvation found in a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Countless people found their way to (or back to) God in response to the boldness of his simple message. I can only imagine their response as he entered the heavens this week.

One thing Billy Graham was clear about is this: this world we live in was never his permanent home. And he knew that. He was just a traveler passing through. We can rejoice for him because he is now home. In fact, he spoke about it long ago:

*"Someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God."*

Today is a good day for us all to reflect on the kinds of basic questions of life and death that Billy would want people to be able to answer for themselves. Where is your eternal home? Do you have a certainty (an assurance) in your heart that you've been forgiven by your Savior? Have you put your trust in him? If not, don't put it off. Today is the day of salvation!

I'll add one more thought: how might we, like Billy Graham, share the powerful message of rescue and salvation in our day? I don't think that any of us need to 'be Billy Graham' in the same way that he traveled from place to place preaching. But collectively, we can speak and bear witness to the message of hope and good news found in Jesus Christ, in a way that is attractive to sinners and compels them to come home to their God.

Lenten Blessings,

*Pastor David Rittgers*