

Greg Laurie Proclaims Liberty to 3,500 at Philadelphia Outreach

Philadelphia, the birthplace of liberty for our nation, saw thousands of individuals set free by salvation last weekend during the annual Harvest America crusade. The event, featuring evangelist Greg Laurie, was broadcast and simulcast live to more than 3,500 venues across the country and 97 nations around the world from Philadelphia's Wells Fargo Center.

More than 27,500 individuals from the Philadelphia area attended the crusade at the Wells Fargo Center, with 2,247 making commitments to Christ over the two nights.

"The church has two secret weapons—preaching and praying," said Laurie, senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, Calif. "But, we don't use them enough, because we spend too much time boycotting and complaining. America needs hope; Harvest America demonstrates the potential of what can happen when we focus on the two things the Lord has commanded us to do."

In keeping with the themes of the U.S. Constitution birthed in Philadelphia in 1788, Laurie spoke Saturday evening on the pursuit of happiness, reminding audiences that many individuals search for purpose and meaning in life in the wrong things and remain unfulfilled.

"It's so ironic that people we admire, who we wish we were, talk about the emptiness of life," Laurie said. "When are we going to get the wake-up call that happiness is not found without God, it's only found with God?"

Laurie went on to address society's trust in wealth,

possessions, power and fame—to not only satisfy them but to save them.

“Everybody, even the atheist, has a god or some altar they bow before,” Laurie said. “Your god might be your stuff, a relationship or success. But here’s the question: Can your god save you on the last day of our life? No, only God can save you.”

Musical guests Saturday evening—Lecrae, NEEDTOBREATHE and Kirk Franklin—received a rousing welcome from Philadelphia-area fans, who responded to Lecrae’s lyrics about living for Christ instead of self.

“You get one life and it will pass; only what you do for Christ will last,” he rapped.

Sunday evening’s musical guests Jeremy Camp and Mercy Me shared, respectively, on the themes of following God completely and trusting in Jesus as enough. The Katinas led worship throughout the weekend, encouraging the audience to sing along with all the familiar songs they performed.

Hundreds of churches throughout the Philadelphia area participated in preparations for the crusade, inviting and making plans to bring friends and family members to the event. Volunteers served as ushers, as counselors and in the follow-up process, where those who have made faith decisions will be referred to local churches to assist them in their spiritual growth.

Counting both Saturday and Sunday participants, more than 3,500 remote venues received the event live via HD-quality video available through both Internet streaming and satellite broadcast. This compares to 2,400 remote venues for Harvest America 2012 and represents churches, homes, community centers and a variety of other locations where people gathered in every state and around the world to take part in the crusade.

In addition, local Philadelphia radio station WFIL hosted the live audio broadcast Saturday evening, with WNTD hosting Sunday evening, providing programming from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. ET for transmission by 700 radio stations throughout the nation. Another 46,000 individuals logged on to receive a live stream of the service online via their computers or mobile devices. So far, of those viewing online, 1,815 made a commitment to Christ over the weekend, with more responses still to be reported.

The crowd at Wells Fargo Center combined with all of the participants tuning in remotely to bring some attention to Harvest America via social media. At emcee Levi Lusko's encouragement, individuals took "selfies" and posted them, as well as commented on the event, yielding 51,000 new Facebook likes, 13,600 photos on Instagram, 7,800 new Twitter followers, 24,000 tweets and 10.1 million views on Twitter, resulting in #HarvestAmerica trending No. 1 on Twitter between both evenings.

Sunday evening, Laurie spoke on "Home Before Dark," reflecting on his own experience and reminding audiences that life is fleeting.

"We all want to be happy and we are all going to die," he said. "People have everything they need to make them happy, but they lack life. What if the Christians are right? What if God can be known?"

Since Harvest Crusades began webcasting on the Internet in 1997, 1.3 million individuals have tuned in via their computers. It became an easy transition starting last year to incorporate satellite broadcast technology to connect Harvest America crusades with host sites across the nation so that local events could occur simultaneously. The inaugural event was simulcast from Angel Stadium in 2012.