

2023 National Prayer Breakfast: Congress Gathers for Biden's Faith Remarks

The 71st annual National Prayer Breakfast was held on Thursday, Feb. 2, for members of Congress as they anticipated President Biden's remarks on faith in America.

While the president quoted Scriptures such as Matthew 22:37-39 which tells us to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and to "Love your neighbor as yourself," his message was not centered on Christian theology, but was more about the diversity represented within America.

"Loving our neighbors is also part of the essence of the American promise," Biden says. "A promise that comes with a new Congress that is more diverse and more different and more religions more races—more diversity than ever before in our history."

Biden continued, stating: "People of all faiths, some people of no faiths, gay, straight, immigrant, Native American, differences that express infinite creativity in God who is able to see His reflection in countless ways in different people," Biden says. "It's also an expression of American conviction that our diversity is one of our greatest strengths."

Biden also assured that the White House would be open for celebrating Easter, Jewish holy days and Hinduism's Diwali.

This presidential message centered on humanity's strengths and weaknesses comes after the Congress took back the event from the private organization who had been running it for years.

Previously, the Christian organization, The International Foundation, also known as "The Family," had been running the event. However, Congress took the event into their hands and brought it back to the basics as a simple assembly between Congress, the president and his cabinet and each politician's guest, as reported by Religious News Service. Part of the decision to change who ran the prayer breakfast was based on issues that occurred after a Russian operative sought to make connections with U.S. politicians at two of these events. The large breakfast feast was even switched out for a light fare of bagels and coffee.

Following Biden's speech, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 was praised, and Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie gave the keynote address on the story of the Good Samaritan and how Americans are meant to be good to one another.

"What would happen in this 21st century of ours if we did just that: go and do likewise?" McKenzie questioned. "What if we would step over cultural guardrails to be examples of public love to people who are traumatized beside the road? What would happen if we would undertake the tough task to demonstrate restorative love and real tangible ways in our classrooms?" The event continued with more distinguished speakers and worship from the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. The call for unity is no doubt a great call in a nation divided, but the need for Jesus' Lordship over our nation cannot be ignored.

The day before the prayer breakfast was the National Gathering for Prayer and Repentance, where speakers and guests prayed and cried out to God for repentance and healing for our land and for their own individual lives.

"I don't know what great problem you're facing, financial problem or physical problem or emotional problem or marital problem," speaker Anne Graham Lotz said. "There's no problem or thing that you face that's greater than Jesus."

Rabbi Jonathan Cahn also warned that America was set as a city on a hill to be blessed and share the light of the Gospel with the world, but that now we are far off course from that call and purpose God had set for our nation.

“Our only hope is God,” Cahn says. “There is no other. Without God, this nation will be lost.”

While the president’s speech may have fallen short in acknowledging Christ as the Lord over our nation, having events like the prayer breakfast and the gathering for prayer and repentance are reminders that we still have religious freedom in America, even if it seems to be more difficult in today’s climate to be a Christian, and that there is still hope for our nation. Jesus is still the one we can call on.

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