

Why We Should Still Honor America

As the turbulent '60s concluded and a new decade began, Billy Graham appeared at a July 4 event in Washington, D.C., called "Honor America Day."

More than 400,000 people attended, while millions watched on television or heard it on the radio in 123 other countries.

Bob Hope, Dinah Shore, Jack Benny, Glen Campbell, The New Christy Minstrels and Teresa Graves were among those who performed that day.

According to liner notes on the album, Honor America Day was denounced by the extreme right and the extreme left, but was supported by ordinary Americans, "rich and poor, black and white, Republicans and Democrats, Christians and Jews."

The idea reportedly stemmed from a telephone conversation between Billy Graham and Hobart Lewis, editor-in-chief of the Reader's Digest, with hotel executive J. Willard Marriott later taking over the bulk of organizational work.

Organizers hoped the event would provide an "antidote for the poisons of defeatism, cynicism, and disillusionment that boil[ed] from the wells of America's unsolved problems."

One commentator noted that Graham's message was a "moving, articulate plea for unity, faith and courage amid the strife of the seventies."

Read Part of Graham's Message:

"Pericles built a civilization upon culture and it failed. Caesar built a civilization upon power and it failed. Our forefathers founded the United States upon faith in God, and our country will survive only as it honors God.

“Our nation was built on a foundation of moral law, in which a person’s rights were also balanced by a person’s responsibilities. Why should I, as a citizen of heaven and a Christian minister, join in honoring any secular state?

“The Bible says, ‘Honor the nation.’ As a Christian or a Jew, or as an atheist, we have a responsibility to an America that has always stood for liberty, protection and opportunity.

“There are many reasons why we honor America today. America has opened her heart and her doors to the distressed and persecuted of the world. America has been the most generous nation in history. We have shared our wealth and our faith with a world in need.

“America has never hidden her problems and faults. With our freedom of the press and open communication system we do not sweep our sins under the rug. America defends the right of her citizens to dissent. Dissent is the hallmark of our priceless freedoms. But when dissent takes violent forms it becomes anarchy.

“We may be a vastly different people today than we were 200 years ago. Our society is far more complex, more pluralistic. But of this we can be sure. God has not changed and His laws have not changed.

“He is still a God of love and mercy. But He is also a God of righteousness and judgment. Any individual or nation, which ignores His moral and spiritual laws, will ultimately face His judgment.”

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