

Nat'l Prayer Breakfast speaker tells audience including Trump, Pelosi: 'Jesus said love your enemies'

By [Leah MarieAnn Klett](#) ⁽¹⁾, Christian Post Reporter



Arthur Brooks delivers the keynote address at the 68th National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, February 6, 2019. | YouTube/Screengrab

In an address delivered at the 68th National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., conservative author Arthur Brooks encouraged biblical love and polarization," reminding attendees that Jesus ordered His followers to love — and not just tolerate — their enemies.

Opening his speech, Brooks, a professor of public leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School and senior fellow at the Harvard Business School, said, "Jesus."

"[The same Jesus] who taught us to love God and taught us to love each other," he added. "Today, I'm here to talk to you about the biggest crisis of our nations today: It's the crisis of contempt and polarization that's tearing our societies apart."

"In this crisis resides the greatest opportunity we have ever had as people of faith to lift our nations up and to bring our people together," Brooks said.

When it comes to an "old" problem like contempt and polarization, It's important to "think differently" to achieve a new and effective solution, he said.



President Donald J. Trump delivers remarks at the 2020 National Prayer Breakfast Thursday, Feb. 6, 2020, at the Washington Hilton in Washington, D.C. | Office of the President

The author of 11 books turned to the words of Jesus, society's "greatest entrepreneur" and thinker, from Matthew 5: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Such words are as "subversive and counterintuitive" today as they were 2,000 years ago, Brooks said.

But to apply these words to today's polarized society, "we need to make the problem personal," he contended. The speaker revealed that his own political beliefs are politically liberal, starkly contrasting his own politically conservative beliefs.

"I want it to be personal to you on this day," the *Love Your Enemies* author said. "Let me ask you this: How many of you love somebody with whom you are not comfortable hearing someone insult that person that you love? Make it personal, my friends."

Moral courage, he said, isn't standing up to those with whom you disagree. Rather, it's "standing up to those with whom you agree on behalf of the common good."

When it comes to marriage, contempt "kills," he pointed out, adding, "Contempt is ripping our country apart. We're like a couple on the rocks in prime time TV ... it's tearing our society apart."

"How do we break the habit of contempt? Some people say we need more civility and tolerance. I say, nonsense. Why? Because civility and tolerance are not the answer. Jesus didn't say, 'tolerate your enemies.' He said, 'love your enemies.' Answer hatred with love."

Brooks gave audiences three pieces of homework: First, "ask God to give you the strength to do this hard thing, to go against your human nature and love your enemies."

"You believe Jesus' teaching, act like it," he implored the audience. "Ask God to take political contempt from your heart. Sometimes, when it's hard, ask God for help."

Second, Brooks encouraged attendees to "make a commitment to somebody else to reject contempt."

"Of course you're going to disagree ... that's what makes America great, it's the competition of ideas," he said. "But do it without contempt. Ask God for help."

Finally, he advised his audience to "go out looking for contempt."

"It's your opportunity for moral perfection," Brooks explained. "Why? Because when people treat you with hatred and you answer with love, you become a missionary. This is your opportunity to show people what leadership is all about. Run toward the darkness, bring your light."

"When you leave this National Prayer Breakfast today, you'll be back in a world with a lot of contempt. See it as your opportunity," he added.

Brooks advised listeners to imagine a sign above the door reading, "You are Now Entering Mission Territory."

"If you see the world, if we see the world outside the room as mission territory, we might just mark this day as the point at which our national h

President Donald Trump also spoke at Thursday's event, which was also attended by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who led the Den impeachment charge against the Republican president.

Ahead of Brooks' speech, Gospel artist Cece Winans sang "Peace from God." She quoted Philippians 4:7: "And the peace of God, which surp hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

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