

Praise the LORD, for He is good

Happy Thanksgiving, everybody.

This morning we are going to travel back in time to the year 1620.

It's early November. A ship from England has made its journey to the New World, landing in what they thought was the Northernmost part of the Virginia Company.

<picture>

It had been a harrowing crossing.

/On board that ship were 41 Separatists. Today we call them Pilgrims.\

The Separatists believed that the Church of England was hopelessly corrupt.

/So they decided to separate from the established national church under the king, King James.\

They were seen as dangerous radicals. That brought severe persecution upon them.

So they sought out God's will and the more they prayed, the clearer it became that the Lord wanted them to go to North America – the New World.

**/Finally, they set sail for the New World aboard the ship called the Mayflower. **

There were about one hundred passengers on the Mayflower, but most were not Separatists. Only 41 were what we now know as Pilgrims.

/Conditions on that ship were **brutal.** \ **<picture>**

Over 100 people were crammed into a space about the size of a volleyball court.

There was very little light or fresh air.

There were no toilets, and no garbage collections.

/The voyage lasted 66 days. They had set sail from Plymouth, England on September 6th 1620. The land of Cape Cod was first sighted on November 9, 1620.\

William Bradford, who became governor of Plimoth Plantation, recorded the event;

“Being thus arrived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all their perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element. And no marvel if they were thus joyful.”

But the coming winter would be their most severe trial yet.

/“...What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His grace?”

It came to be known as the **“General Sickness”**.

/The Pilgrims started dying.\

Six dead in December. Eight in January. The more adversity came, the harder they prayed. And still the death toll mounted.

February saw two a day dying, and some days 3 or 4.

At one point in February, there were only five men well enough to care for the sick.

But almost imperceptibly, the light and life of Christ began winning the day.

When the worst was finally over, the little outpost had lost 47 people. The youth fared best, with no daughters dying and only 3 of the thirteen sons. But 13 out of 17 wives died.

Yet in spite of all, they came through in remarkable shape. At Jamestown the death rate was 80-90% but here in Plimoth it was about half.

/And then an event happened that marked the turning point in their fortunes.\

One Friday in the middle of March, a tall, strong native walked up their main street, came into the common house, and cried out “Welcome Englishmen”. <picture>

/Startled, they got out a welcome of their own, and then the native asked in flawless English “**Have you got any beer?**”\

And that’s how the Thanksgiving tradition of beer and football got started. (that’s a joke!) <picture>

Turns out they didn't have any beer, but they did have brandy and some food. He ate with gusto. His name was **Samoset**.

Their nearest neighbors were the Wampanoags who lived about 50 miles to the southwest and were led by their wise chief Massasoit.

So Samoset went on his way the next day and headed off to stay with the **Wampanoags**.

/The following Thursday, he returned - and this time he was not alone.\

/Samoset had brought with him another native. He spoke better English than Samoset did. And he was of all things a Patuxet. \

The Patuxet tribe had lived in Plimoth but had been wiped out by a plague. Yet here was a living breathing Patuxet brave. <picture>

/This second native was **Squanto**, and he was to become, in Bradford's words, "**a special instrument sent of God for their good, beyond their expectation**".\

In the months to come, it became clear to all that Squanto had been sent by God.

But first let me give you the highlights of his amazing story about how he came to be in Plimoth in March of 1621.

/It began in 1605 when Squanto and four other natives were captured. The Indians were taken to England where they were taught English.\

Nine years later, Captain John Smith sailed to Virginia, taking Squanto with him. Smith returned Squanto to the Patuxets. He named that place New Plymouth.

But Squanto and 19 other Patuxets were captured and brought to the slave market in Malaga in Spain.

/But monks from a nearby monastery bought Squanto, and told him about Christ .\

The Lord's hand worked mightily in the life of Squanto.

After returning to London, he hitched another ride to New England in 1619. This ship landed in Maine, where it picked up Samoset!

/Six months before the Pilgrims were to arrive, Squanto returned to his homeland (Plymouth) and there he learned that his entire tribe had perished.\

He wandered the land and ended up with Massasoit.

/Then Samoset arrived with the news that a small colony of peaceful English families had settled at Patuxet. They faced starvation. \

Squanto and Massasoit came back with Samoset to Plymouth. Squanto served as Massasoit's interpreter.

Out of that meeting came a peace treaty of mutual aid and assistance that would last for forty years until Massasoit's death.

/When Massasoit left to return home, **Squanto remained behind.**\

He taught the Pilgrims how to catch eels.

/He showed them how to fertilize the ground for planting corn by using fish.\<pic>

Squanto also taught the Pilgrims how to hunt deer, plant pumpkins, and (to my everlasting gratitude) how to make maple syrup.

He showed them which herbs were edible and which were medicinal.

And he introduced them to the beaver pelt. They were in plentiful supply and also highly prized throughout Europe at the time.

/Squanto demonstrated the grace of God in the lives of the Pilgrims.\

When we were lost and helpless and wretched, God our Father gave us Jesus.

Squanto lost everything – his family, his tribe, his very identity. Yet if he hadn't, he would not have been there for the Pilgrims when they needed him.

/Jesus lost everything too, for our sake. \

He became poor for our sake, that we might become rich in Him. He died so that we could live. He left heaven so He could take us back to heaven with Him.

God will supply all our needs in Christ.

Phil 4:19-20

19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

That includes our physical needs and our spiritual needs.

That summer of 1621 was bountiful.

And the harvest was so plentiful that they would have enough corn to see them not only through the winter but all the way through to the following summer to their next harvest. <picture>

/The Pilgrims were overwhelmed with gratitude. To Squanto. To the Wampanoags, But mostly to their God.

They had put all their trust in Him, and now He was blessing them beyond their wildest dreams.

/Governor Bradford declared a day of public thanksgiving to be held in October..

Massasoit was invited – and arrived unexpectedly a day early...with 90 braves!

Massasoit had not come empty handed. His braves had hunted 5 deer and over a dozen wild turkeys.

It was a festive occasion. <picture>

Women made hotcakes and tasty pudding and fruit pies.

They learned a new native delicacy: how to roast corn kernels in an earthen pot until they popped, fluffy and white – you guessed it...Popcorn!

The feasting continued into the night and the next day.

Between meals the Pilgrims and the Indians engaged in shooting contests with guns and bows, and foot races and wrestling. <picture>

/Things went so well that their first day of Thanksgiving was extended for three days.\ and that was the beginning of what we know today as the “long weekend”.

/Governor Bradford summed up the Pilgrim experience with words from Psalm 107.

“May not and ought not the children of these fathers rightly say:” Our fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness; but they cried unto the Lord, and He heard their voice and looked on their adversity,”...

“Let them therefore praise the Lord for He is good; and His mercies endure forever.”

“Yes, let them which have been redeemed of the Lord, shew how He hath delivered them from the hand of the oppressor.

When they wandered in the desert wilderness out of the way, and found no city to dwell in, both hungry and thirsty, their soul was overwhelmed in them.

*/"Let them confess before the Lord His loving kindness and His wonderful works before the sons of men." *

Taking our cue from Bradford, we will close with another Psalm of Thanksgiving.

Ps 65

*65 There will be silence before You, and praise in Zion, O God,
And to You the vow will be performed.*

*2 O You who hear prayer,
To You all men come.*

*3 Iniquities prevail against me;
As for our transgressions, You forgive them.*

*4 How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near to You
To dwell in Your courts.*

*We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house,
Your holy temple.*

*5 By awesome deeds You answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation,
You who are the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea;*

*6 Who establishes the mountains by His strength,
Being girded with might;*

*7 Who stills the roaring of the seas,
The roaring of their waves,
And the tumult of the peoples.*

*8 They who dwell in the ends of the earth stand in awe of Your signs;
You make the dawn and the sunset shout for joy.*

*9 You visit the earth and cause it to overflow;
You greatly enrich it;
The stream of God is full of water;
You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth.*

*10 You water its furrows abundantly,
You settle its ridges,
You soften it with showers,
You bless its growth.*

*11 You have crowned the year with Your bounty,
And Your paths drip with fatness.*

*12 The pastures of the wilderness drip,
And the hills gird themselves with rejoicing.*

*13 The meadows are clothed with flocks
And the valleys are covered with grain;
They shout for joy, yes, they sing.*