

## TWO UNLIKELY PILGRIMS

Texts:

Hebrews 11:13: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

1 Peter 2:11: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

### I. The American Pilgrim

The Pilgrims landed in America on December 21, 1620. The people were dying from disease and others were soon to follow from starvation, had it not been for a Patuxet Indian named Squanto. He had been captured a few years earlier by Englishmen, and then taken to Spain and sold by the tyrants who kidnapped him. Fortunately, some Spanish monks purchased him with the intent to free him. After making the purchase, they greeted this bound young Indian with the words, "Estas libre," meaning "You are free." So Squanto's introduction to Christianity was a positive one. One biographer said he began to love Jesus at this time. After Squanto was liberated from bondage he went back to England hoping to eventually find a way to go back home to America. When he finally returned home from Europe he discovered that his home was full of empty huts and there was not even a sound of a barking dog to be heard. His family and every member of his tribe had died from disease. History tells us that close to 100,000 Indians died during this time. Had Squanto not been captured and enslaved, he would have died with his entire tribe.

That spring and summer Squanto proved himself invaluable. He led the Pilgrims to brooks brimming with herring beginning their spring migration upstream. He showed the Pilgrims how to fish with traps. He taught them where to stalk game in the forest. The children learned which berries they could pick for their families. Twenty acres of corn grew tall after Squanto showed the Pilgrims how to plant fish (as natural fertilizer) with the native corn seeds from a local tribe.

Historians have conjectured that had not Squanto been at that right place at the right time, the early Plymouth settlement would simply not have been. The people would have starved to death and America as we know it today would be drastically different. Appropriately, at this time of the year we give thanks. Although

God does not orchestrate human bondage, He worked all things, including Squanto's brief slavery, for our good and His glory. If Squanto had not been captured, carried away and mastered the English language he would not have been available to come to the aid of the Pilgrims. Governor William Bradford wrote, "Squanto is a special instrument sent by God for their good beyond their expectations."

I am reminded of William Cowper's poem, a portion of which says, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace; behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face. " The Bible says, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:9).

The Pilgrims, their great friend Squanto, and other Indians celebrated the first fall Thanksgiving festival with venison, roast duck and goose, turkeys (or whatever qualified as "fowl"), shellfish, bread, and vegetables, with woodland fruits and berries for dessert. Before they ate, the Pilgrim men removed their wide-brimmed hats and Indians stood reverently as the governor led them in solemn prayer. Two years later we find Squanto, still in his 30s, had become mortally ill and lay dying. In the formative days of our country, his value and worth under God is inestimable. Pilgrim leader William Bradford later recorded that as he knelt beside the dying Indian, Squanto whispered, "Pray for me, Governor, that I might go to the Englishmen's God in heaven." Squanto breathed his last in November 1622, gone from the new world for the last time, now captured by the loving arms of his Savior, forever set free. "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16). Squanto had truly become a pilgrim in the new world like his Christian counterparts from England.

## II. The Samaritan Pilgrim

The Samaritans were looked down on by the Jews of Jesus' day. But Jesus went out of His way to win the Samaritan woman to Himself: "And he must needs go through Samaria" (John 4:4). One of the most heart-warming stories of the Bible is the story of the Good Samaritan. "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him" (Luke 10:33). In Luke 17 is a story of the thankful Samaritan whose course of his life took a turn from disease and eventual slow and eventual painful death to the path of a pilgrim on his way, like Christian from Pilgrim's Progress to the Celestial City.

### A. The Distance the Law Demanded

Luke 17:12; Leviticus 13:46

B. The Desperation of the Diseased

Luke 17:13

C. The Delight of Obedience

Luke 17:14; Leviticus 14:1-7

D. The Decision of Gratitude

Luke 17:15, 16

E. The Disturbed Savior

Luke 17:17, 18

F. The Deeper Message

Luke 17:19-21

Conclusion:

Robert Frost wrote,

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Living as a pilgrim in this life is the road less traveled by but it will make all the difference. These two unlikely pilgrims had major interruptions in their life and their responses should not only be observed, but also emulated. We, like the American and the Samaritan pilgrims, should embrace the God who captured our attention and serve the God who by His grace changes our path. Proverbs 4:18: “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.