

TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch /Opening Prayer by: Walden David

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Shannon Smith

#881 Mansion Over the Hilltop

#753 Farther Along

Scripture Reading by: Tristan Strickhausen

#387 Tell Me the Story of Jesus

Lord's Supper and Contribution

#490 Our God, He Is Alive

Sermon: "A Song of Thanksgiving: Psalm 100"

Psalm 100

#915 Trust and Obey

#587 Sing and Be Happy

Closing Prayer by: Jerry Mallernee

Welcome by: Daniel Balch

Evening Assembly Song Leader: Shannon Smith

#480 Blessed Assurance

#286 Wonderful Story of Love

Scripture Reading: Parker Balch

Opening Prayer: Bobby Rader

#574 Oh, How I Love Jesus

Sermon: "One Word: Redemption"

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

#909 There's A Fountain Free

#878 Sweet By and By

Closing Prayer: Brooks McKelroy

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 6:00pm — Worship

Wednesday: 10:00am — Ladies Bible Class, 7:00pm — Bible Study Classes

Nov. 24, 2019

"Stand Firm in...Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Straying Pilgrims

We all think we know the gist of the story of the first Thanksgiving. The English settlers known as Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in November, 1620. After establishing a colony, they endured a harsh winter. But through the help of some friendly American Indians, they were able to survive and plant some crops. When a bountiful harvest came through in late 1621, they and their native allies all got together and celebrated, giving thanks to God for his provision. And we, as Americans, have continued to observe that tradition ever since.

Like much of our history that has become American mythology, there is a mixture of fact and embellishment in that account. They didn't land at Plymouth Rock. The 1621 celebration was more of a harvest festival, like many celebrated in England at the time, than what we would consider Thanksgiving; there was a more interesting observance along this line in 1623, though that will have to wait for another article. At any rate, it certainly did not become an immediate annual observance. The Governor of the Colony, William Bradford, in his work *Of Plymouth Plantation* does not even mention the 1621 event. The only other contemporary history, from Bradford's right hand man Edward Winslow, covers it in only 5 sentences—all of the information we have on the celebration. It was seemingly forgotten until the 19th century, and we were already practicing Thanksgiving.

Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the Pilgrims could celebrate at all. I am not sure we appreciate just how dire their circumstances were in those early days. The *Mayflower* set sail in September, 1620 with 102 passengers on board. They withstood a 65-day journey across stormy seas, all crammed into a space about the size of a bus. When they arrived in North America, they had to explore the coast before settling, but the onset of winter's snow and ice hampered their efforts. By December, most of the passengers and crew were coughing violently, and many also had scurvy. Ultimately, they happened upon an abandoned Wampanoag Indian village, on tall hills with cleared land, and chose to build there in late December.

By the end of winter, only 47 colonists survived. During the worst moments, only 6 or 7 were healthy enough to feed and care for the rest. Of the 18 wives who had set out on the journey, 14 died; many of the survivors were bereaved widowers and orphans. Nevertheless, when the harvest came in with enough food for them to make it through the next winter, they celebrated God's sustenance. How could they maintain that outlook? I think much of it is related to the fact that they saw themselves as "pilgrims."

Have you ever wondered why we call this group of people the Pilgrims? It's not because they called themselves that—not in the way that we use the term, anyway. There is no documented use of the term

Our Sick

Derrick Loften is at home and doing better.

Phillip Cottle had surgery last week

Larry Hicks is in Rollingbrook Rehabilitation in Baytown.

Continued Prayers

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Gwen Pettit, Gary Nielsen, Harold & Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Jackie David, Frank & Tina Garcia, Eric Davis, Dayla Hale, Doris Trahan, Joe Edd Stifflemire, J. P. Williams

Shut Ins

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Dr. Ronald Davis, Larry Hicks, Mark Wilcox, Bill Lunceford

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Mwanza, Africa, Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Plastic Bags

The Food Bank is in need of plastic grocery bags. A barrel is in the foyer.

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Nov. 25th at 7:00 p.m.

Ladies Bible class will not meet on Wednesday, Nov. 27th.

The office will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 28th and Friday, Nov. 29th.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Dec 3rd at 8:00 a.m.

Primetimers will be having a Potluck meal on Tuesday, Dec. 10th at 6:30 p.m. Followed by a gift exchange and a great time. Gifts no more than \$10 please. Please sign up so we know how many can make it.

The Year End Party is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 15th after evening service. More information to come.

Nursery Help Needed

If you are interested in helping in the nursery during worship service, please let Barbara Cantu know. We are working on a new schedule for next year and it will be mailed out in December.

Communion Preparation: Susan McCain

Nursery Attendants: Tania Balch, Pat Hobbs

Communion Preparation for Sunday, Dec. 1st: Gloria McKelroy

Nursery Attendants for Sunday, Dec. 1st: Jane Tinkle, Rita Upton

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before 1798, when a song composed on Forefathers' Day in Boston used the word; it did not become common until the 1820s. Though it was used in a nontechnical sense, it comes from a passage in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, where Bradford talks about the decision to leave Holland and head for the New World: *So they left that good and pleasant city, which had been their resting place, near 12 years; but they knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits.*

We typically use the term only as a proper noun to refer to this particular set of English Separatists; we forget that it has an ordinary meaning. Bradford was drawing directly from **Hebrews 11**, where the writer talks about those who died in faith, *having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles—or pilgrims, as the KJV has it—on the earth.* Instead, they desired *a better country, that is, a heavenly one.* (**Hebrews 11:13-16**).

Scripture is full of imagery of God's people as sojourners and exiles in the present world. From Abraham, called up out of Ur to follow God to an unknown land; to Israel, wandering in the wilderness—a status that is supposed to influence their treatment of others, so much so that the terms continue to be applied to them even after they are settled in the land; to the church. We are urged as *sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh*, and instead live in a visibly different way (**1 Peter 2:11-12**). We are reminded that *our citizenship is in heaven* (**Philippians 3:20**). There is a real sense in which God's people are not quite at home in the places they live.

That awareness was the basis of the Pilgrims' ability to celebrate, and I am convinced that a greater appreciation of it would shape us too. Let us enjoy everything that God has blessed us with and give thanks to him; but let us thank him even more that these are only a shadow of the even greater things to come.

*Here we are but straying pilgrims, here our path is often dim;
But to cheer us on our journey, still we sing this wayside hymn:
Yonder over the rolling river, where the shining mansions rise,
Soon will be our home forever, and the sound of the Blessed Giver
Gladdens all our longing eyes.*

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

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