

From: Ed DeVilbiss
Sent: 11/11/2015 11:45:41 AM
To:
Cc:
Subject: Fwd: I trust this will assist in increasing your appreciating for Thanksgiving

Friends,

In this season of Thanksgiving the following may be of interest. ED

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Det F. Bowers, Jr.** <det.bowers@beingtransformed.org
<<mailto:det.bowers@beingtransformed.org>>>
Date: Sun, Nov 8, 2015 at 6:02 AM
Subject: I trust this will assist in increasing your appreciating for Thanksgiving
To: Thinkers@beingtransformed.org <<mailto:Thinkers@beingtransformed.org>>

THANKSGIVING

Since history is linear rather than cyclical, one of the responsibilities of every era is to embrace the wisdom of previous generations (Job 8:8). Ignoring the wisdom of the ages assures meaningless lives. When a society is only interested in the present, it refuses to appreciate the advantages of recognizing that the one hundred and two Mayflower passengers of 1620 birthed the founding fathers of 1776 and the virtuous patriots of 2015.

Writ large upon the birthright, heritage, legacy and future of America is the DNA of a small courageous folk whose handprints are our own. How did they come to plant such a vibrant spirit in a godless land? The briefest of answers is that they were persecuted for their pursuit of the biblical Christ.

In 1608, a gathering of about one hundred and twenty-five people left the small English village of Scrooby in Nottinghamshire for Holland. Why did they leave? They recognized that the difference between their government's view of religious freedom and their own perspective could not be reconciled. They were called Puritans by their detractors because they so wanted purity in their worship of God that they willingly sacrificed living with their families in their homeland.

These plain country folk set ashore in Amsterdam but soon moved to Leiden where they stayed for eleven years and became about five hundred in number. The problem they encountered was though they had freedom of worship, they could not maintain their English culture – their children were becoming like the Dutch in their language, customs and worldview. Their options were few, so they returned to England where they regrouped and set sail for the Land of Liberty.

These English Puritans, who would become known as Pilgrims, “thought of liberty as the freedom to do what is right, not to decide what is right.”[i] The diminutive Mayflower vessel anchored near Cape Cod with forty-one adult males who signed the 153-word *Mayflower Compact* intended this Constitution to serve future generations as one of the people’s founding documents.

The Mayflower families were overall a knowledgeable and Christian people – they were separated from the Laodicean religion of England. On November 11th, A. D. 1620, America’s first Constitution was written beginning with the words: “In the name of God, Amen.” That inaugural Constitutional Convention went on to state the purpose of their coming to this continent: “Having undertaken for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony...” These early Puritan pilgrimaging Christians did not come to this land for mere economic opportunity, but to settle and build a new nation in accordance with God’s law in Christ.

The Mayflower congregation perceived themselves as pilgrims in the sense that this world was not their home. William Bradford, Governor of Plymouth Colony settlement, left his three-year-old son in England because he was going to secure a better country for his heirs. As our national ancestors, these English Puritan-Leiden Pilgrims established a standard for all future generations inhabiting this sacred soil – and they paid dearly!

The first *recorded* thanksgiving celebration of 1623 was enjoyed by fifty of those still living who survived the maiden voyage and the first year (in addition to a child who was born aboard the Mayflower after they reached Cape Cod). Only three of the fifty-one were older than forty and there were only four married couples who remained due to the harshness of the winter.

Nonetheless, nature was not their adversary (Eph. 1:11). God was working His purpose in all the matters surrounding His brave pilgrim band. Though we rarely know the answers to life's "whys," what we do know is that God moves heaven and earth to accomplish His will in the lives of individuals and nations. The sweep of history beggars our vision, imagination and minds (Ps. 73:3; Isa. 55:8; Mt. 5:45; Ro. 11:33).

Because these earliest Americans knew that their God was always near, they were patient and thankful in difficulty, judicious and thankful in prosperity (Jer. 23:23). Though we never comprehensively know God's perfect will or the implications of His divine providence, we are reminded of Governor William Bradford's insight that he did not know whether God's will was for the Leiden congregation to settle in America, he did know it was "lawful" and "honourable."
[ii]

America's foundational history battles today's individualistic narcissism, egotism and self-centeredness. Our storied past reveals where God was when the Mayflower set sail – He was right where He is today. America's former days allow devoted Americans to place our lives in the grander story of statecraft and nationhood. The Puritan-Pilgrims were chosen by God "to become His temple in America," His "citadel of light," and were "being led in a path that had been walked by another Chosen People." [iii]

We name the same Name they named and we do so in the very same part of God's world. We are part of them because they were a congregation of God's saints. They were committed to something so much larger than themselves. They were in covenant with God, one another and with the generations preceding as well as following them. They faced much difficulty, but their difficulties proved the value of a national character birthed by their Bibles.

Just as your theology will determine your address to vexatious developments, your forefathers were looking for the HEBREWS 11:16 country and city. Though they were dogged by unruly elements and hardships of every sort, they did not love the world as much as they loved God's character and glory (I Jn. 2:15ff.).

The Pilgrims were not grander, larger or more gifted than you. Nevertheless,