

Thanksgiving and the Puritan Hope

Patrick McKay Sr.

November 24, 2011



Thanksgiving is a solemn and sacred occasion. When we approach God and ask for something and become the recipients of that for which we asked, and return to God to offer thanks, it is because we are prompted by gratitude, one of the noblest traits of the human heart. It is indeed solemn and sacred if our thanks are from the heart, sincerely.

In our nation many will celebrate Thanksgiving as an occasion for feasting and holiday, but for latter day saints I trust our hearts shall be moved by that gratitude which has characterized the noble and great

men and women of the past who did God's bidding.

The ancient Slavic peoples had a custom that when they erected any important building they would place under the first foundation stone, a living creature. It was their idea that by so doing they would impart life to the inanimate structure so that it would grow in majesty and vitality. In a broader and better sense when we look under any institution we find the life of one or more individuals and that institution is perpetual, strong and enduring in proportion to the

Thanksgiving and the Puritan Hope

Patrick McKay Sr.

November 24, 2011

vitality and force of character which undergird its building.

When we look under this institution of our annual Thanksgiving Day we find the stern, yet pious Pilgrim Fathers. We are told that the first thanksgiving to be observed in America under the present civilization was in 1621, that once divine providence began smiling upon these pilgrims the first thought was one of gratitude and thanksgiving. These pilgrims aboard the Mayflower, landed at Plymouth Rock the previous December of 1620. So difficult was their ocean voyage, that when it was over they confessed that a higher power had preserved them and brought them to the new world. Their history reminds us of Lehi's words;

There shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord (2Ne 1:10 [2Ne 1:6 LDS]).

After settling in good harbor, and being brought safely to the land of promise they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven who had delivered them. This first act of

the Pilgrims upon landing in the new world echoes that of Christopher Columbus and his crew, who had also fallen upon their knees, weeping and thanking God for leading them to this land. This response by the Pilgrims was prophetically forecast by Nephi;

They did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them (1Ne 3:152 [1Ne 13:16 LDS]).

Behind them lay a vast and furious ocean, before them a desolate wilderness. What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His goodness? There were no houses, no grocery stores, no firewood cut. No agents from FEMA. No federal government programs, and no friends or family to greet them. Their supplies were depleted from the voyage, and they could plant no crops because it was winter. Many died and by spring, only fifty-five of the original one-hundred and two settlers were still alive. Yet due to their gratitude God's saving hand was upon them.

They met an Indian named Tisquantum or Squanto. Fifteen

Thanksgiving and the Puritan Hope

Patrick McKay Sr.

November 24, 2011



years earlier Squanto had been captured by Captain George Weymouth and taken to England where he learned to speak English. Nine years later he was returned by Captain John Smith, but was captured again by one of Smith's officers, Thomas Hunt and taken to Spain and sold along with sixteen others for \$1,4000.00 each. Squanto was purchased by some Catholic Friars who used their limited funds to free as many slaves as they could. He spent the next six years in the monastery until he was again able to return to his home village, the very spot the Pilgrims' now occupied.

Squanto had arrived just six months prior to the Pilgrims' and to his

surprise all in his village had mysteriously died. This is the reason the Pilgrims' were allowed to occupy this land. Other tribes feared to go there. It was really the only place on the North American continent that the Pilgrims' could have settled without a fight with the Indians. They had intended to land at the mouth of the Hudson River where New York City now stands, but were blown off course and landed much further north. This was outside the Virginia Company's jurisdiction under whose charter they were to inhabit America. By settling there they would be under no one's rule but their own. They would be under no sovereign but God, and under no king, except Jesus.

The providential hand of God actively participated in the establishment and preservation of the Pilgrims' on the American continent. He had inspired their decision to come. He had purged their numbers as evidenced with the abandoning of the Speedwell and directed them to the very spot He had prepared for them so that in

Thanksgiving and the Puritan Hope

Patrick McKay Sr.

November 24, 2011

their weakened condition they would not have been defeated by the very Indians they had come to convert. Unable to endure with the skills they had brought with them, God had even chosen an Indian to teach them how to survive and prosper in the wilderness.

The reason God was actively engaged with them in the establishment of their religious colony in America was because of his determination to fulfill His covenant made to Abraham. Ephraim, who had been sewn among the Gentiles, (Amos 9:9) had settled in England, which literally means the land of Ephraim. While England was free of Papal rule, they were still persecuted. In order to free them so that the sons of Jacob could build a holy city on the American continent, God directed and preserved this colony of Christians. Jeremiah predicted;

Thus saith the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest (Jer. 30:2).

These Pilgrims' under the guiding and sustaining hand of Almighty God, paved the way for others to come, mostly the Puritans to escape tyranny, worship righteously, and build a holy city. They hoped to complete the Reformation by purifying the church, make a refuge for Israel and establish the Kingdom of God on earth. They believed that their coming to America was necessary to save the work of the Reformation. To them the Reformation had not yet produced the original church. Those institutions developing from it were forming another unholy alliance. Only America offered a place of sanctuary. In John Winthrop's famous sermon, *A Model of Christian Charity* delivered on board the Arbella he would proclaim;

*And seeing the church hath no place left to fly into but the wilderness, what better work can there be, than to go and provide tabernacles and food for her against that time when she come hither. Robert C. Winthrop, *Life and Letters of John Winthrop*, pp 309-10*

Thanksgiving and the Puritan Hope

Patrick McKay Sr.

November 24, 2011

What these early colonist did is enrich the soil for the seeds of the Restored Church to spring forth. The Puritan hope is really the testimony of the Restoration. This little band of Christians were inspired and prophetically led to this American wilderness. Hosea prophesied;

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her (Hosea 2:14).

John on the Isle of Patmos had forecast this very event for us when he declared;

Therefore, to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might flee into the wilderness, into her place where is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent (Rev 12:14).

They were blessed with the spirit of prophecy and revelation when God spoke comfortably unto her, and this is so clearly realized when we compare their writings with the prophetic words through Joseph Smith when he speaks of the

“coming forth of my church out of the wilderness” (D&C 5:3d).

They not only believed that in time the colony they were building would witness the restoration of the New Testament Church, but that it would also preserve it. Furthering their colony would result in the formation of a holy city, a city set upon a hill. John Winthrop again would write;

We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when He shall make us a praise and glory, that men of succeeding plantations shall say ‘The Lord make it like that of New England’. For we must consider that we shall be as a city on a hill. Robert C. Winthrop, *Life and Letters of John Winthrop*, p. 19

The Puritan hope is really the testimony of the Restoration.

I am thankful for my heritage. I am thankful for the time honored customs of the Pilgrim Fathers at

Thanksgiving and the Puritan Hope
Patrick McKay Sr.

November 24, 2011

Plymouth Rock with their uncommon vision of a city set upon a hill. I am thankful for the restoration of His church which has emerged from the wilderness and by God's promise shall yet become fair as the sun and clear as the moon and terrible as an army with banners. I am appreciative of the lives of good and great men and women of our nation, what power for good they have been. I am thankful too, that under the cornerstone of the Restoration are buried the testimonies and works of good and great men and women who have given their lives to the cause of Zion; who having seen the promises afar off have dreamed, prayed, preached and sung about the city set upon a hill as revealed in the everlasting gospel.

This is a uniquely American holiday birthed in the hearts and souls of our Pilgrim Fathers. May we of the Restoration never forget our divine destiny to build a holy city to which his ancient covenant people may be gathered home from their long dispersion.