

## *A Thanksgiving Lesson for Turkeys (and Other Folk)*

**Turkey:** Welcome, one and all! Gobble, gobble! I'm thankful we have gathered together to celebrate Turkey Day.

**Pilgrim man:** Pardon me, but Thanksgiving is not all about feathered fowl!

**Turkey:** Then why is the turkey always at the center of our feasts?

**Indian woman:** I think you need to hear from us native Americans and pilgrims about our first harvest celebration here in America, which is often called the first Thanksgiving.

**Indian man:** But before that first Thanksgiving was the long winter.

**Pilgrim woman:** It was a terrible winter indeed. We had just arrived from England in 1620 on our small and crowded ship, the Mayflower. The winter wind and sleet blew while we struggled to build shelters. We called this the "Starving Time" because we had little food. Many fell sick.

**Turkey:** How did you possibly survive?

**Pilgrim man:** Sadly, nearly half of us did not survive.

**Turkey:** Dear me! I don't see anything to be thankful for in this story.

**Pilgrim woman:** Despite our losses, we were thankful to be in a land where we were free to worship God. We had fled England because the government was trying to be in charge of the church and tell us how to worship God.

**Pilgrim man:** But Jesus Christ alone is in charge of the church, and we must follow His Word, the Bible. Because we obeyed God rather than man in these matters, the government put some of us in prison, made others pay fines, and killed others.

**Pilgrim woman:** God brought us safely across the ocean to a land where we could worship Him freely.

**Indian man:** And God provided Indian friends, led by Samoset and Squanto, to teach the pilgrims how to grow corn and find other food.

**Indian woman:** Squanto had been kidnapped and sold as a slave in Europe. He was rescued by Christians. When he came back to America, he learned that his whole tribe had been wiped out in a plague. But he used the English language he'd learned to reach out to the struggling pilgrims.

**Pilgrim man:** Thanks to the help of the Indians, by the next autumn, God had blessed us with a large harvest. We decided to invite the Indians to a feast to rejoice in God's goodness to us.

**Pilgrim woman:** Imagine our surprise when about 90 hungry braves showed up!

**Indian man:** But we provided food like deer so there was plenty for all.

**Turkey:** Food! Now we're getting to the good part!

**Indian woman:** Sorry, but I think you're still missing the true spirit of Thanksgiving. The pilgrims had just lost many of their dear friends and family members, yet they still had grateful hearts to the Lord.

**Turkey:** For turkey and gravy?

**Pilgrim man:** Well, they were thankful for food, but for more than that.

**Turkey:** For religious freedom?

**Indian man:** Yes, but escaping religious persecution wasn't the only reason the pilgrims came to the new world. They saw themselves as "stepping stones"<sup>1</sup> to bringing the good news about Jesus to us native Americans who had never heard.

**Turkey:** What is that good news about Jesus? I want to know—even if it's not about food!

**Pilgrim man:** The God who provides people bread to eat also sent His own Son, Jesus, who is called the Bread of Life.

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<sup>1</sup> In *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford wrote of the pilgrims: "they cherished a great hope and inward zeal of laying good foundations, or at least making some ways toward it, for the propagation and advance of the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in the remote parts of the world, even though they should be but stepping stones to others in the performance of so great a work."

**Pilgrim woman:** Jesus said:

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. . . . For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”<sup>2</sup>

**Indian woman:** You see, we have all disobeyed God, but Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment we deserve for our rebellion. He rose from the dead, and we can, too, if we trust Him to make us right with God.

**Turkey:** You’ve given me much to think about. I’ve been such a turkey!

**Pilgrim man:** All of us should remember what God has done in the past and thank Him. William Bradford, the governor of us pilgrims at Plymouth Plantation, wrote: “We have noted these things so that you might see their worth and not negligently lose what your fathers have obtained with so much hardship.”

**All puppets together:** Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

**Turkey:** Gobble, gobble!

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<sup>2</sup> John 6:35, 40 (ESV)