

Thank God, and Others

Thursday, and through the weekend, is a season of thanksgiving. It was initiated by colonists, proclaimed by presidents and honored by Americans since the inception of this great nation. One of the first Thanksgiving observances in America was entirely religious and did not involve the feasting that has become traditional. On December 4, 1619, a group of 39 English settlers arrived at Berkeley Plantation on the James River near what is now Charles City, Virginia. The group's charter required that the day of arrival be observed yearly as a day of thanksgiving to God.

The first New England Thanksgiving was celebrated less than a year after the Plymouth Colonists had settled in the new land. The first dreadful winter in Massachusetts had killed nearly half of the members of the colony – 46 of the original 102 who sailed on the *Mayflower*. But new hope grew in the summer of 1621. The corn harvest brought rejoicing. Governor William Bradford decreed that a three-day feast be held.

Since then, the United States was born and has shown remarkable growth and incredible achievement. The reasons for thanksgiving have multiplied, too. Some of them are worthy of sharing together as we assemble with family and friends:

- Be thankful for this country. The dream carried by those colonists has evolved into the greatest nation the world has ever known. Be proud of its accomplishments. Support its ideals. Wear its label of citizenship proudly.
- Be thankful for our freedoms. The right to worship, to speak freely, to petition for correction of grievances, to assemble, to print facts and opinions, to pursue happiness – these are precious gifts that are beyond the wildest imaginations of much of the world. Their protection must be our constant endeavor.
- Be thankful for family, where shared lives take on new meaning and fulfillment, and wherein the hope of civilization resides. The family is a sacred relationship. Nourish it.
- Be thankful for Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home – companies in which we can demonstrate our obedience to God through service to others.
- Be thankful for love. This quiet, moving, powerful, seeking force flows and ebbs – as does the mighty ocean tide – and bobbing in its waves is the very destiny of mankind. It may be expressed in the tenderness between a man and a woman, warm and intimate, or it may be evident in the affection of friendship, loyal and enduring. Or perhaps it shows in national unity or world brotherhood. Love is a flame that must be fanned – in marriage or in a partnership of countries.

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- Be thankful for memories, precious and abiding – golden moments that are life's buried treasures.
- Be thankful for hope, that throbbing anticipation of new and greater experiences still to come, of ambitions yet to be fulfilled. It is the one desire that transforms a drab and routine existence into one of vibrancy and meaning.
- Be thankful for faith. Trusting in God is imperative if man is to understand himself and the reason for his being – if he is to be happy and content within his soul. The giving of thanks should be directed to the Creator first and foremost.

But thanksgiving should include the expression of gratitude to relatives, friends and associates – those individuals who make our lives richer. Thank someone across the table or in the living room or in the office for their love and friendship and influence on your life.

--Beecher Hunter