

Pilgrims---Past and Present

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone, " (Ephesians 2: 19).

The memory of the Pilgrims - those devoted settlers who celebrated the first Thanksgiving with their Native American neighbors - is still alive as we gear up to celebrate another Thanksgiving at the end of this month. Did you realize, though, that the name "Pilgrims," which is used very extensively in American history books today, wasn't applied to this particular band of English settlers until nearly 175 years *after* they had landed on American soil in 1620?

It was a clergyman named Rev. Chandler Robbins who first used the name "pilgrim" in reference to the Plymouth Rock pioneers in a sermon he delivered on "Forefathers Day" in 1793. In that sermon Pastor Robbins read aloud a letter written by one of the first settlers, William Bradford. Bradford's letter described how 101 passengers mustered up the courage to climb aboard a little ship called the *Mayflower* and begin their treacherous 3-month journey to a virtually unknown land. He wrote, "They knew they were pilgrims and looked not much on those things, but lifted their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits." Robbins took those words to heart and started calling his ancestors "pilgrims." And the name stuck.

It's a name that should stick with us too - "pilgrims" - for it's a name that accurately describes our own life as Christians. In this world, Paul says, we are *'foreigners and aliens'* - "pilgrims" - but no longer when it comes to the family of God and his home in heaven because of what our Lord Jesus has done for us. So this Thanksgiving I think it would be good for us to also take on the name "pilgrim" as we *"lift our eyes to the heavens"* and embrace our ties to the Almighty God who has so graciously bound us to himself.

While God blesses us daily with food, shelter, clothing, health, family and friends here on earth, we can be certain that he has even bigger and better blessings waiting for us in heaven. *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, "the Apostle John says, "that we should be called children of God!"* (1 John 3:1). That is exactly what we now are by trusting in Jesus as our Savior from sin. It is our God-given faith in Jesus as our Savior that made us *'fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.*

"When we work, act, and speak in ways that honor God, assured of his daily forgiveness and the promise of eternal salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ, our lives take on new meaning, and our thanksgiving transcends the physical and temporal. Our journey on this earth may become treacherous at times, and the voyage may seem long. But in the grand scheme of things, we know that our God is still at work, guiding, guarding, protecting, and leading all of his "pilgrim" people - past, present, and future.

It is our God and Savior who gives us the courage to journey forth. His power is passed on from generation to generation, and his grace is shown again and again to everyone who has their eyes set on him. That really is something to be thankful for, isn't it! Happy Thanksgiving! -

Blessed by the love of Jesus,

Pastor Terry