

Lutheran Church of the Master  
580 Kuhn Road, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188  
Curt Gerald, Interim Pastor  
November 26, 2009  
Thanksgiving Day in the USA  
"No Fear! No Worry! Just Joy and Faith!"

**FIRST LESSON:**

**Joel 2:21-27 (New International Version)**

- <sup>21</sup> Be not afraid, O land;  
be glad and rejoice.  
Surely the LORD has done great things.
- <sup>22</sup> Be not afraid, O wild animals,  
for the open pastures are becoming green.  
The trees are bearing their fruit;  
the fig tree and the vine yield their riches.
- <sup>23</sup> Be glad, O people of Zion,  
rejoice in the LORD your God,  
for he has given you  
the autumn rains in righteousness. <sup>[a]</sup>  
He sends you abundant showers,  
both autumn and spring rains, as before.
- <sup>24</sup> The threshing floors will be filled with grain;  
the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.
- <sup>25</sup> "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—  
the great locust and the young locust,  
the other locusts and the locust swarm <sup>[b]</sup>—  
my great army that I sent among you.
- <sup>26</sup> You will have plenty to eat, until you are full,  
and you will praise the name of the LORD your God,  
who has worked wonders for you;  
never again will my people be shamed.
- <sup>27</sup> Then you will know that I am in Israel,  
that I am the LORD your God,  
and that there is no other;  
never again will my people be shamed.

**Psalm: 126 (New International Version)**

- <sup>1</sup> When the LORD brought back the captives to <sup>[a]</sup> Zion,  
we were like men who dreamed. <sup>[b]</sup>
- <sup>2</sup> Our mouths were filled with laughter,  
our tongues with songs of joy.  
Then it was said among the nations,  
"The LORD has done great things for them."

<sup>3</sup> The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we are filled with joy.

<sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, <sup>[a]</sup> O LORD,  
like streams in the Negev.

<sup>5</sup> Those who sow in tears  
will reap with songs of joy.

<sup>6</sup> He who goes out weeping,  
carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy,  
carrying sheaves with him.

## SECOND LESSON: 1 Timothy 2:1-7 (New International Version)

<sup>1</sup>I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—  
<sup>2</sup>for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and  
holiness. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants all men to be saved and to come to a  
knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ  
Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time. <sup>7</sup>And for this  
purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher  
of the true faith to the Gentiles.

## GOSPEL: Matthew 6:25-33 (New International Version)

### *Do Not Worry*

<sup>25</sup>"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body,  
what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

<sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly  
Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup>Who of you by worrying can add a  
single hour to his life<sup>[a]</sup>?

<sup>28</sup>"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

<sup>29</sup>Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>If that is how  
God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not  
much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What  
shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup>For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly  
Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup>But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these  
things will be given to you as well.

Your first thought might be that the title of this message is based on Bobby McFerrin's  
"Don't Worry, Be Happy" from the movie "Cocktails." (For the lyrics, see this website:  
<http://www.lyricsondemand.com/onehitwonders/dontworrybehappylyrics.html>).

But it isn't, I can assure you it isn't ... at least I don't think it is. You see ... I don't know  
McFerrin ... I haven't seen the movie Cocktails ... and I don't know if McFerrin is a  
person of faith ... and I don't know if there is an element of faith in the movie.

My sense in the song is that it is kind of based on that wonderful relaxing Caribbean rhythm that we enjoy when we go to our Timeshare on St Maarten ...just kind of forget about it all ... and enjoy the moment right here and right now.

I don't know if McFerrin knows about the prophet Joel ... I don't know if he has ever read or sung Psalm 126 ... I don't know if he has read 1 Timothy ... and I don't know if he is aware that Jesus loves him or that Jesus said "don't worry about your life."

I suspect the difference between McFerrin and you and me today is the difference between worry and concern ... between fear and confidence ... between fate and faith!

Let's face it ... there are certainly any number of things that could and should concern us ... shall we name a few: how about

Terrorism  
Wars  
Cancer  
The economy  
Health care  
Unemployment & Underemployment  
Wall Street  
The Bears  
Home Mortgages  
Auto and College Loans  
Asteroids and Comets  
The Year 2012  
Christmas Shopping  
Aging  
Hunger  
Homelessness  
Murders and Murderers  
Global Warming

Let's face it ... we have many things to be concerned about, don't we!

But, I think one of the many emphases of Scripture is precisely that fact ... men and women have many things to be concerned about it ... and the people of faith who have gone before us have made some interesting observations ...

God is faithful  
God saw them through the hard time ... didn't keep them from hard times  
Even in captivity, the people found ways to laugh  
"We went out weeping ... we came back singing songs of joy"  
The people found the value of praying  
The people found the value of intercessory prayer  
The people found the value of giving thanks

I thought about this when we were in Disney World a few weeks ago ... there we were looking at the Magic Castle ... the Streets of Disney were filled with little princesses in dresses of blue and with little Buzz Lightyears ... lights and digital cameras were flashing ... parades were parading and bands were marching ... and in the midst of all I thought about children who were hungry, hurting, homeless, and helpless.

I think that is the way we were wired to be ... that is what Matthew 25's separation of the sheep and goats is all about ... the People of God are always aware of God's goodness and we are always concerned for those who aren't ...

sometimes we are among the blessed and sometimes we are among the less blessed ... but we know that God's blessings are enough for everyone ... and so when there isn't enough ... or when the blessings are unequally shared ... we sense it and we do as the 1897 hymn by Johnson Oatman, Jr., says:

(1) When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,  
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

**Refrain:**

Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
Count your blessings, see what God hath done!  
Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
\*Count your many blessings, see what God hath done.  
[\*And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.]

(2) Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,  
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

(3) When you look at others with their lands and gold,  
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;  
Count your many blessings—wealth can never buy  
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.

(4) So, amid the conflict whether great or small,  
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;  
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,  
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end

That is, I suspect, what brought our Pilgrim ancestors to a table of some sort back there in 1621.

If you receive the PARADE magazine with your Sunday paper, you may have seen this article back on November 15:

## WHAT AMERICA EATS

# Be a Pilgrim For a Day

by A.J. Jacobs

published: 11/15/2009



This time of year, most people like to wish each other “Happy Turkey Day.” But in my home, we prefer “Happy Deer Day,” “Happy Eel Day,” or “Happy Swan Day.”

Let me explain. A few months ago, my 4-year-old asked me if the Pilgrims’ first Thanksgiving featured a SpongeBob float in the parade.

No, I said. They didn’t even have a Snoopy balloon. This vision of hardship shocked him.

It also made me realize I didn’t know much more about the first Thanksgiving than he did. I knew there were the Pilgrims and Wam--panoag Indians and they ate some food together. Then, afterward, they, um, unbuckled their shoes and watched a football game? I had no idea.

The point is, many of us have become disconnected from the original celebration of the holiday. And since I believe in hands-on—or stomach-on—learning, I decided we’d recreate the first Thanksgiving. The real menu, prayers, games, everything.

### The best chefs create your perfect Thanksgiving

My wife reluctantly agreed, as long as I promised not to wear a loincloth. I realized we needed a guide for our culinary adventure and found the perfect one in historian Richard Pickering, deputy director of Massachusetts’ Plimoth Plantation, home of the Pilgrims. He agreed to help us.

“The Thanksgiving we practice today has more to do with myth than reality,” Pickering said. The food we eat is much closer to the cooking of 1860s America—when President Abraham Lincoln

made Thanksgiving a national holiday—than to 1620s Pilgrim fare.

“Was there even turkey at the original dinner?” I asked Pickering. It’s unclear, he replied. The only eyewitness account of the event mentions “wildfowl,” but that could have meant ducks, swans, passenger pigeons, or other birds native to the region.

Venison was definitely one of the main dishes in 1621, and we know the Wampanoag Indians provided five deer. The tables may also have contained lobster, eel, mussels, fish, Indian corn, radishes, turnips, and spinach.

Oh, and there wasn’t a buckle in sight—the Pilgrims never wore them. Victorian-era magazine illustrations erroneously showed the Pilgrims wearing accessories with buckles, and the idea stuck.

Armed with my new knowledge, I started calling stores and browsing supermarkets, asking the clerks questions like, “Do you have any liverwort?” and, “What about black carrots?” (Today’s orange carrots are a newfangled 18th-century hybrid.) They shook their heads. Nor, thankfully for all concerned, was I able to track down swan.

Finally I did manage to pull together a smorgasbord of authentic ingredients. I planned to roast and boil all of the dishes, since sautéing and stir-frying were unheard of then.

### Thanksgiving in Half the Time

On the big day, my wife, children, and I went to Central Park to gather branches and twigs for the fireplace in our New York apartment. After returning, I lit the fire and stoked it. I went to the kitchen to grab a mallard duck to roast.

Then I heard sirens outside. This modern noise! What a nuisance! How could I get into the Pilgrim mind-set with all this hubbub?

Fists pounded on our door. “Something burning in there?” a voice yelled. I opened the door and saw five New York City firefighters.

As it turned out, our chimney was sending plumes of smoke into our neighbor’s apartment. One of the firefighters sprayed foam on our fire, and the blaze—and my duck—sputtered out.

“I’m sorry about this,” I told them. “Can I offer you some radishes? Or turnips?”

They politely declined all root vegetables. My only consolation was that the first Thanksgiving also had unexpected guests—the Wampanoag—so I wrote off our visitors as a tribute to them. (Yes, the Native Americans essentially crashed the Pilgrims’ party. Contrary to what many of us learned in school, the first Thanksgiving was not a carefully-orchestrated diplomatic event. It was serendipity.)

Around then, Pickering arrived to assist with the preparations and keep us true to our 17th-century mission. A *Mayflower* descendant with a gray-flecked beard, he brought energy and wisdom—and two lumpy heirloom pumpkins. He was able to join us because we were holding the feast not in November but in September. The first Thanksgiving is thought to have occurred in either September or October, and it lasted for three days.

We cooked the rest of the meal on the stove without tripping the fire alarm. Guests trickled in: parents, in-laws, friends, and cousins. We ended up with about a dozen participants—short of the original 150 but not bad for a city apartment.

“A little etiquette,” I announced as we sat down at the table. “First, no forks. The Pilgrims used only their hands, spoons, and knives. And they held their spoons like shovels, not like felt-tip pens.” Pickering had brought a 17th-century book of manners, and I read aloud some rules. “Save teeth picking for later and moderate your spitting. No smacking your lips like hogs. While sitting, do not move back and forth, lest your fellow diners think you are breaking wind.”

I passed around a hand-washing bowl filled with water and leaves of basil and marjoram. (Though in this flu season, I offered Ye Olde Purell as well.)

By this time, Pickering had changed into period costume, a purple wool suit trimmed with silk braid and topped off with a beaver felt hat. He said a prayer, and we dove in.

We started with the fowl. For our meal, we included turkey. Pickering told me that if the Pilgrims did eat turkey, they’d have eaten a wild bird, leaner than today’s Pamela Anderson types and with more dark meat. I found one at a gourmet butcher, and we cooked it Pilgrim-style, in a stew with herbs and toast. It was a little gamy.

The lobster, boiled in red-wine vinegar, was a big hit. Although our lobsters are shrimpy compared to those of 1621, when the crustaceans commonly weighed 20 pounds and had claws the size of a human arm.

As for deer, a friend had venison in his freezer. (Bonus: He’s a descendant of Miles Standish!) We cooked it in a stew thickened with ground walnuts to mixed reviews. Next up were grits, turnips and a boiled salad (yes, boiled) of spinach and currants.

We saved the eel for last, boiled in white wine and sprinkled with fennel seed. But maybe I should have called the Butterball Eel Hotline, because it was downright nasty—a mix of rubbery eel flesh and hard bone. As my friend Shannon said, “My gag reflex is getting quite a workout.”

### **Rocco DiSpirito’s Turkey 911**

We washed down our food with water and white wine. The Pilgrims (and, in fact, the Puritans) approved of beer, wine, and spirits, but they frowned on drunkenness.

The overall verdict of the meal? Surprisingly edible—but not so edible you’d overeat. Although the flavors weren’t overpowering, it wasn’t as tasteless as I’d imagined. The Pilgrims did sneak in some seasoning.

As we digested, Pickering treated us to a Pilgrim-era riddle: “What goes over the water and under the water but doesn’t get wet?” Pickering asked.

“A tunnel?” people guessed. “An extremely early submarine?”

Pickering shook his head. “No, a duck’s egg that is still inside the duck.” Hmm—I guess you had to be from 1621.

Other kinds of entertainment enjoyed at the original Thanksgiving were running races (I let my sons play Wii Fit Jogging), shooting off guns in military exercises (we substituted water pistols), and a charming game called “Kick the Shins.” The last is played exactly like it sounds: We stood in a circle and kicked one another in the shins until only one person was left standing. My 5-year-old son thought this was even more fun than Wii.

The real miracle of Thanksgiving, Pickering explained, was that the Pilgrims and Native Americans had any fun at all. “This was their first harvest after a devastatingly harsh winter,” he said. “Forty-eight of the original 102 Pilgrims died that winter.”

He let it sink in. Half of the Pilgrims died of scurvy or exposure—half. The Wampanoag weren’t much better off, since they had just come off a lethal plague. “Some Native American populations suffered a 90% death rate,” Pickering said. “And some villages, like Patuxet, the original site of the Pilgrims’ colony, were completely wiped out.”

The 1621 revelers had undergone a mind-boggling amount of suffering. And yet there they were at the first Thanksgiving, sharing their harvest, running races, and overflowing with gratitude.

If they could appreciate life amid such chaos, pain, and uncertainty, I could give thanks for all the good things in my relatively cushy life. I’m thankful for this night, for the courage of the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag, for the love and tolerance of my wife, for the Snoopy float, for the abundance of food, for our families, for our health, for our Wii Fit, and for the fact that my neighbor forgave me for almost burning down his apartment.

*A.J. Jacobs is the author of three best-selling books. His newest is “The Guinea Pig Diaries.”*

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