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Happy Thanksgiving

Reminding Us of All the Things We Have to be Thankful For

When the pilgrims set foot on Plymouth Rock on December 11, 1620, they were met with the elation of religious freedom but also with the harsh reality of the winter season. They soon learned they were ill-equipped to survive, and the results were devastating. Only 55 of the 102 members of the Plymouth colony survived the first Winter, but in a remarkable and resilient act of faith, when the ship's crew sailed back to England the next spring, all 55 pilgrims decided to stay. Fortunately, the local Native Americans befriended the New World settlers and taught them how to live off the land and survive the barren winter. The pilgrims were prepared when the next cold season rolled around, and for that, they were thankful. To celebrate, the Native Americans were invited to a feast of gratitude for the bountiful season.



As children, we all heard the basic story of the pilgrims and Native Americans wearing their stereotypical attire with a colorful spread of turkey and all the dressings on the table before them. But our young imaginations could not grasp the humble reality that the pilgrims were just thankful to be alive, to have food on the table. The “thanksgiving feast” did not become an annual event, rather it was one celebrated only on occasion. One such occasion came on December 18, 1777, as General George Washington's troop settled in their winter quarters in Valley Forge, Pa. The soldiers and colonists had much to be thankful for, as two months earlier, the British surrendered at the Battle of Saratoga- essentially assuring colonial independence. It was 156 years after the pilgrims first sat down with their Native Americans friends to give thanks, but the theme of gratitude and humility remained.

The modern-day Thanksgiving celebration was designated in 1863 by Congress to take place on the fourth Thursday in November as “a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.” Thanksgiving celebrations continue to reflect the New World settlers' spirit of humility and being together with those for whom we are most thankful—our family and friends.

We should also be thankful that we live in a country that encourages its citizens to express their beliefs without fearing persecution. We have courageous men and women whose pride for their country is exercised

in the defense of their freedom that we are so blessed to share. We have the ability to mark a ballot to vote rather than having to resort to violence to take a stand. We can worship how we choose and whom we choose. We can gripe about the government just as freely as we can praise it. We can debate each potential law thanks to our system of representative democracy. We have the lives of the late Rosa Parks and other civil rights advocates to remind us how far we have come on our journey to attain racial equality. We have learned that our fellow human beings reach out with compassion and generosity in the face of tragedies such as Hurricane Katrina.

When you find yourself breathing in the aromas of the turkey in the oven and the other staples of your Thanksgiving Day feast this year, don't hesitate to acknowledge all that you are grateful for. I wish you a blessed and safe Thanksgiving.

Second Important Lesson- Pickup In the Rain

Last week I shared the first of five stories a friend of mine e-mailed me entitled: Five Important Lessons To Make You Think About the Way You Treat People. Here is the second important lesson:

One night at 11:30 p.m., an older African-American woman was standing on the side of an Alabama highway trying to endure a lashing rainstorm. Her car had broken down, and she desperately needed a ride. Soaking wet, she decided to flag down the next car. A young white man stopped to help her, generally unheard of in those conflict-filled 1960s. The man took her to safety, helped her get assistance, and put her into a taxicab. She seemed to be in a big hurry, but wrote down his address and thanked him. Seven days went by, and a knock came on the man's door. To his surprise, a giant console color TV was delivered to his home. A special note was attached. It read:

Thank you so much for assisting me on the highway the other night. The rain drenched not only my clothes, but also my spirits. Then you came along. Because of you, I was able to make it to my dying husband's bedside just before he passed away... God bless you for helping me and unselfishly serving others.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Nat King Cole

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com> and <http://www.senate.mo.gov/crowell>.

Senator Jason Crowell proudly represents the people of Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry and Scott counties in the Missouri Senate.