



FAITHFUL LIGHT CHURCH
Pastors: Dennis & Diane Gordon



THE POWER OF THANKFULNESS

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ME

**A THANKFUL HEART EMPOWERS ME
TO TRUST IN JESUS WHO MAKES ME FREE**

THEME SCRIPTURE

(Leader Repeat 2x With Congregation)

***Psalm 22:3-4** "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest
the praises of Israel. ⁴ Our fathers trusted in thee:
they trusted, and thou didst deliver them."*

INTRODUCTION: It is God who puts the desires of His own heart into the hearts of men, that He may grant the desires of our hearts! And it is God who leads each one of us to arrive at the destination that He knew all along, that we would reach. But we should know, that when we follow the way the Lord is leading, we will have to let go of some things, especially ties to the world that God knows will only weigh us down. Only by going through many hard trials, does God refine us like Gold, and we become valuable tools in the Master's hand.

ORDER OF SERVICE:

1. Light Candles/Opening Prayer
2. Kid Songs/Bible Craft/Story
3. Adult Fellowship Break
4. Prayer & Worship Set
5. Bible Lesson & Group Prayer
6. Blessing Songs & Benediction

OBJECTS TO BRING: Magnets & Sand; Oreo Cookie Thanksgiving Turkey Craft & Directions

2. GOD HAS GREAT PURPOSE FOR US IN OUR TRIALS.

Why does God let us go through such hard times? Like the Pilgrims so long ago, there is not one among us who does not have a set of circumstances that is difficult. Though each of us comes from a different kind of family and economic background, we all share the same need - we all need love, we all need Jesus, and we all need to be thankful, the same as the Pilgrims needed to be thankful.



But how can we be thankful when we are only one paycheck away from being homeless, or when we have so much work we will never catch up, or there is no work, or we suffer such great loss that our heart is breaking, or we must face death, or we struggle with depression, or a family member threatens our happiness with anger and abuse, or we feel hopeless because we keep making the same mistakes over and over again, or no matter where we turn happiness eludes us, or poor health and pain are constant companions? What is the most difficult situation for each of us right now? What does God's plan in allowing these painful situations in my life? What does He want me to find? How can I be thankful in this? Because:

GOD IS GOD AND HE IS WORTHY OF MY PRAISE!

James 1:2-4 “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³ knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

1 Peter 1:7-8 “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ; ⁸ whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

God always has a purpose when we have committed our life to Him, but to move forward we must leave some things behind.

3. JUST AS GOLD IS REFINED BY FIRE, GOD’S PEOPLE ARE PURIFIED BY THE FIRE OF TESTING.

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

*Job 23:10 “But **he knoweth** the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”*



EMBARKATION OF THE PILGRIMS

Delft Haven, Holland, July 22, 1620 by Robert W. Weir Oil on canvas, 12' x 18'

Not only were Christians in England facing the normal day to day problems that you and I go through, but they were about to begin a journey that would test them beyond any normal limit. Between the years of 1558-1859, the pilgrims had suffered countless unfair situations, and terrible hardships because of their faith which caused them to separate themselves from the Church of England. The severity of the Roman Inquisition had brought a strong revolt against it, which outlawed the practice of Catholicism as well as any other religious practice. **All private or public worship was required by law to be conducted only by the state sponsored Church of England.** Getting caught would get you imprisoned, hanged, ‘shortened by a head’, disemboweled or drawn and quartered! The punishments for the crime of worshipping God in your own home were just as severe as during the inquisition. What shall we do if we are no longer allowed to preach from the Bible?

*Acts 5:29 “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, **We ought to obey God rather than men.**”*

4. IS THANKSGIVING THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES?

The **American Pilgrims were a deeply religious people whose heritage was strictly founded on both Old and New Testaments of the Bible.** Why did the Pilgrims have this strong attraction to the Hebrew



Scriptures? **Few realize how solemnly and literally the Pilgrims took the Bible. Jewish sources in particular continue to note this fact.** Although recognizing there is not a direct link between the two, there is striking resemblance of the Thanksgiving celebration to the **Feast of Tabernacles** which Scripture also calls the **Feast of Ingathering**. Here is one typical opinion: "Sukkot, the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, celebrates the autumn harvest; a similarity to the Thanksgiving holiday observed in the United States which is not coincidental. Prior to making their way to the New World, the Pilgrims, themselves the victims of religious persecution, **spent several years among Sephardic Jews in Holland. When they later celebrated the legendary first Thanksgiving, their conscious frame of reference was Sukkot**" "*Sukkot*", Cyber-Kitchen.com).

William Bradford, who became the first Pilgrim governor and proclaimed the first Thanksgiving celebration, used the Scriptures—both Old and New Testaments—for guidance in governing the colony. **"Though it's a uniquely American tradition," adds a Jewish Web site, "the roots of Thanksgiving go back to ancient Israel. In a real sense, the Jews invented Thanksgiving..."** Bradford himself studied the Hebrew scriptures. The idea of giving thanks to God with a feast was inspired by that knowledge of the Bible. **In a very real way, the Pilgrims saw themselves, too, as chosen people of God being led to a Promised Land...**"Like the ancient Hebrews did before them, Bradford and his flock also praised God's loving kindness, the famous refrain of Psalms 106 and 107 and Jewish liturgy (**'Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endures forever'**)" "Thanksgiving, the Puritans and Prayer," shalomjerusalem.com/heritage.

5. FREEDOM TO WORSHIP GOD COMES WITH A PRICE

The church of England was caught up in a formal religion, without obedience to God's word, nor genuine change to the heart of the worshipper. **The Pilgrims made a stand for the Gospel and the pure word of God**, so they had 3 choices: 1. They could conform to the popular belief, 2. Face imprisonment, torture & death if they continued to follow their heart, or 3. Face the uncertainty of life in a 'New World'. Like the early Christians, their commitment to God was strong enough to face fear of the unknown and even death. **Does God promise that nothing bad will happen if we follow Him? No, the Bible tells us that Christians will be persecuted:**



Revelation 13:7&9 *“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations....”*⁹ *If any man have an ear, let him hear.* ¹⁰*He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”*



1 Corinthians 10:13 *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*

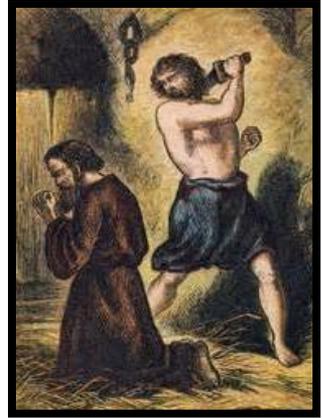
The early Christians, Pilgrims, and Christians, mostly in other countries, up until today, have faced unimaginable torture and death for giving testimony of their faith in Jesus, but Jesus promises to give us strength to bear whatever comes, so that if we are called to bear the cross, He will help us hold fast to our faith in Him, even until the moment of our death.

Hebrews 12:12 *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

6. WHEN WE SUFFER FOR DOING GOOD WE CAN KNOW THAT GOD ALWAYS HAS A HIGHER PURPOSE.

Was it wrong for the Pilgrims not to obey the church system of their day? Why not just go along in Christian love? **Because God tells us that we are to earnestly contend for purity of faith, even to death.** It is OK if we are persecuted, because we know that the same powerful Jesus who raised the dead; has purposes for our good that are beyond our understanding, and we can trust Him.

***Jude 1:3** “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that **ye should earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints.”*



Paul suffered many tortures and beatings from Roman soldiers for boldly preaching the Gospel but even worse, **he was called a heretic by those very Christians to whom he brought salvation!**

***2 Corinthians 8-9** “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are **perplexed, but not in despair;** ⁹ **persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.**”*

***Acts 24:14** “But this I confess unto thee, that **after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers,** believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.”*

We gladly and thankfully follow the example of Paul, following ‘the way’ which some today call heresy, because we keep the paths of God followed by Paul. We learn from Paul that in every trial, no matter how scary or hopeless, we can find peace through the joy of knowing that even in impossible times, we will find true peace and contentment in Jesus.

***Philippians 4:11** “Not that I speak in respect of want: for **I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.**”*

7. THE PILGRIMS GAVE ALL FOR THEIR FAITH.

The Pilgrims commitment to God did not just change their life goals, but **their commitment to God WAS their life goal.** They sailed 65 long days and nights through severe sickness, because most had never sailed before. They had great sorrow when one boy, William Button died during the journey, but great joy, when a baby boy was born just before the ship landed - named Oceanus!



After the Mayflower arrived in November of 1620, the women and girls lived on the Ship while the men went out exploring for a place to settle. Then they sailed out again to cross over to Plymouth in late

December. There in Plymouth, the men and older boys started to build the colony, while the women and girls remained living on the Mayflower for three months while the Colony was being constructed during January, February, and March. After that first long hard winter, **75% of the women, 50% of the men, 36% of the boys,** and **18% of the girls** had died. The Mayflower departed back for England on April 5, after the terrible first winter was over. They gave so much for all of our freedom to worship our God.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14 *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

These were not willing to compromise the Gospel of the Bible, but they were willing to die for their faith. The apostles, Christians through the ages, and Christians all over the world today, are willing to live and die for their faith. **How does my faith affect my own life goals?** Is my commitment to Jesus showing up in my choices? An old saying is so true, **“First we make our choices, and then our choices make us.”**

8. IN AN UNTHANKFUL WORLD, GOD’S WORD TELLS US THAT THANKFULNESS ATTRACTS BLESSING!

- Children are often disrespectful and expect to be entertained.
- Most Christmas bonuses are expected instead of appreciated.
- Companies have to give perks such as; special parking places, special days, achievement awards, and awards of excellence, above and beyond recognition just to have people do their jobs.
- Whatever happened to being thankful for a place to work and a company that can pay an honest day’s wages?
- If we are not careful, this same spirit can creep into our heart.
- We should not base our relationship with God on what He can do for us, but upon who He is and what He has already done!
- The power of being thankful opens doors to see God’s glory!

OBJECT LESSON: *Magnet & Sand (or Metal Objects)*

Here I have a dish of sand. I know that there are particles of iron in this sand, but when I look for them with my clumsy fingers, I am unable to detect them. I am going to take a magnet, and sweep through the same sand, and look! The magnet is drawing to itself the metal particles! The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, finds no blessing; but let a thankful heart sweep through the same day, and just as the magnet finds iron, so a thankful heart will find heavenly blessings and rejoice in the God who gave them!



Psalms 30:11-31:1 *“Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; ¹²to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever. ¹In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.”*

LET’S BE A MAGNET OF PRAISE FOR JESUS! AMEN?

9. A THANKFUL HEART WILL MAKE YOU FREE.

1 Peter 1:3-6 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4. to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials.”

The Pilgrims had no way of knowing what lay ahead, nor that even with their surrendering all for the love of Jesus, some of them would suffer and die along the way, and some would live to build a new life. Their faith was not in what God could give



them, but in the God who loved them. No matter what happens in our lives, we can rest in knowing the heart of love that God has for us, and trust His purpose. Whether we live or die is not so important to Him as that we live for Him and with Him forever in the kingdom of Heaven. May we be like the pilgrims who have gone before us: No matter what happens, may we be unwavering in our faithfulness to stand and proclaim that the LORD He is GOD!

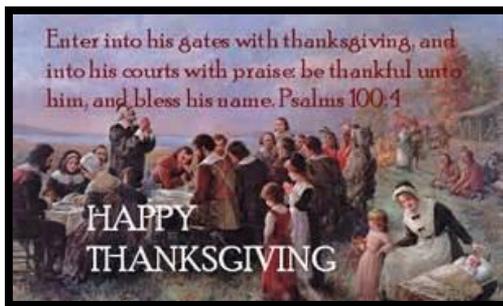
Hebrews 12:1-2 “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross....”

So, with all of God’s people from the beginning of creation, to the Pilgrims whom God brought to establish the free land of America, we echo those Godly examples giving thanks to our God saying:

Praise the Lord for His mercies endure forever!

10. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ME

1. It is God who puts the desires of His own heart into the hearts of men, so that He may grant the desires of our hearts!
2. God has great purpose in our trials to purify us, just as gold is refined by fire, God's people are purified by the fire of testing.
3. Freedom to worship God comes with a price.
4. When we suffer for doing good and do not understand, we must remember that God sees ahead and we can trust His hand.
5. We have been called out of darkness to be transformed by the power of thankfulness.
6. Thankfulness attracts blessing like a magnet!
7. First we make our choices, and then our choices make us.
8. Jesus wants me have the same kind of faith the early Christians and Pilgrims had, so He can do mighty works in my life.
9. There is power in boldly praising the Lord who delivers us.
10. A thankful heart will make you free.



The Pilgrims endured many hard trials so they could be free to worship Jesus. They were thankful that God brought them to America, and they were thankful for life itself. Whatever terrible trial may have happened in the past, or whatever new trial may come, let us praise God, for He lives in the praises of His people!

LET'S PRAY TOGETHER:

Dear Lord Jesus, Thank you for the faith of the Pilgrims that shows us the treasure we have in Your word and in Your Spirit that is worth not only dying for, but is worth giving up everything else to live for! My Father, today, I leave behind every weight that holds me back on my journey with You, and live my life for You no matter the cost, and openly worship You, in Jesus name, Amen.

11. CHILDREN’S STORY: Sailing to a Whole New World

(Give children the Coloring Page)

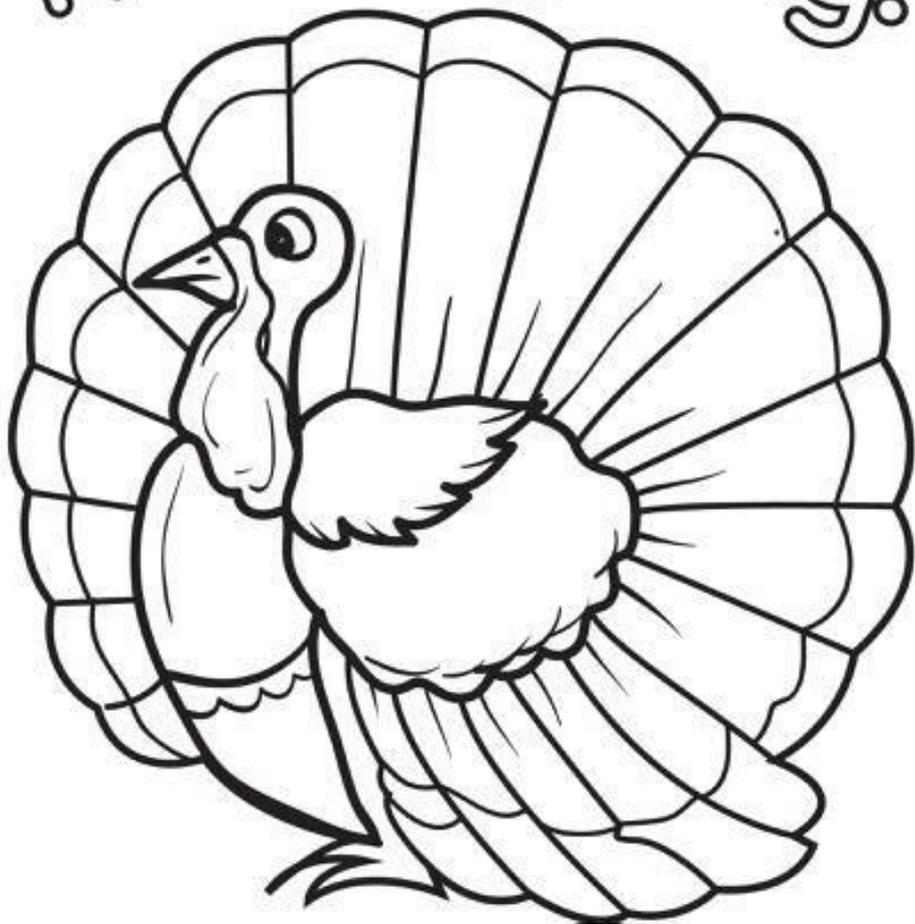
Maggie and Ben walked with their mom and dad to the Wellington’s house. They met in secret so they could worship the Lord Jesus, and teach from the Scriptures like the churches of the Bible, but the law said people could only worship God in a church run by the government. Meeting for church at the Wellington’s was against the law! In a hushed tone Dad said, *“Hurry along, we must arrive at the Wellington’s before anyone sees us.”* If they were caught they would be arrested and go to jail! After church, they left the house slowly, one family at a time, so that no one watching would suspect. It was very hard not to be afraid, but they trusted in the Lord. One day on the way home, Dad whispered with alarm, *“We are discovered! Look straight ahead and keep walking.”* Safely at home, Mom said, *“That was a close one!”* but Dad decided it was time for their escape, and said, *“Pack our belongings, Mother, we must make ready and sail tonight.”*

This is how it was that Maggie and Ben and their parents, together with all the other Pilgrims, arrived at the dock to board a ship going to the “new world,” where they would be free to worship God without fear. They were all very excited, but hoped they would not be discovered before the ship set sail!



They were going to the “whole other world” that Christopher Columbus had discovered way across the sea! Maggie and Ben couldn’t wait to get to America, and eagerly, they wondered, *“What will an Indian look like?”* Finally, everything was ready and they climbed aboard a great ship called “The Mayflower”. The men set sail, and they were free! They sailed and sailed for what seemed like forever, and everyone felt so sick, because they had ever been on a ship before. Some of them were not very strong, and become so sick that they died. But Maggie and Ben’s family made it safely to the shore of the “New World”.

Happy
Thanksgiving!



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