



REFLECTIONS

November 20, 2011

**"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign."**

Revelation 11:17

Thanksgiving

The struggles were many, the risks were high, and the conditions were difficult. But the desire for new beginnings stood stronger than all of those. The freedom to worship God stood stronger still. So in the year 1621, a small community of people, remembered in history as the Pilgrims, found themselves gathered together rejoicing and giving thanks to God for their many blessings.

Edward Winslow was one of them. His hand written account is the only surviving description of that first Thanksgiving. From him we learn that the harvest was complete and the Governor had sent men to hunt geese, duck, and turkey; and that their one-day hunt produced almost a week's food supply. About ninety Native American guests, once hostile toward the Pilgrim newcomers, were welcomed into the festivities; and with them they brought their bounty of five deer to add to the ensuing three-day celebration and feast. Winslow summed up the festival this way.

"And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

Since that first Thanksgiving, our nation has allotted time to pause to give thanks to God for his countless blessings. Yet with so many distractions in our lives, our blessings are often overlooked or taken for granted. And even when we stop to remember them, our attention is easily drawn away from the real source of them all.

So, on this Thanksgiving Day, let us pause to count our blessings, large and small. Let us not forget the abundance of food accessible to us, the healthcare services and protections provided, the peacekeepers that make our streets safe, and the education opportunities available. Let us remember the love of family and of friends we hold dear. And let us give thanks for our country and the many lives given that we might be free.

We are a blessed people *"so far from want, that we often wish [other] partakers of our plenty."* So on this very special day, let us recall the words of Abraham Lincoln in his 1863 Thanksgiving Proclamation. *"No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God..."*

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at richard@reflectingthesavior.org.