

# Thanksgiving

by  
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This coming Thursday we will be celebrating Thanksgiving. The fourth Thursday in November has been set aside as a national holiday. We know it as a day that the Pilgrims in Plymouth, Massachusetts gathered to give thanks for a bountiful harvest and to share their good fortune with Native Americans. The celebration supposedly lasted three days. But there is more to this story that is often overlooked.

The Pilgrims were not the only group to give thanks and celebrate. Colonies throughout Massachusetts and Virginia held similar feasts and celebrations after their crops were harvested. The celebrations were held to give thanks for a good harvest, their survival, and for their faith (Almanac.com). Yet, 50+ years earlier, Spanish explorers in Florida and even a year earlier, British settlers on the James River gave thanks through their own celebrations and feasts.

The concept of giving thanks for a good harvest is not an American idea. Celebrations for a good harvest date long before settlers came to America. References to such celebrations can be found in the writings of ancient Egypt and America (Maya, Inca, Aztec, and Olmec civilizations). Many ancient records tell of the harvest celebrations and giving thanks to their god(s).

There are more than 100 verses and psalms in our Bible that tell us to give thanks, not just to our Lord, God, but also for those bounties that we have, enjoy, and share with others:

- Food and shelter
- Family and friends
- Our freedom to pursue life, liberty and happiness
- Peace and prosperity

But these bounties were not just given to us. We received them through our faith in God, and through the blood of Christ and all who sacrificed their lives for us.

So, as you celebrate Thanksgiving, remember that while it is a federal holiday, it is not a day off from work or a day to party while watching a football game. It is a day of giving thanks for what we have and have been given. It is a day to celebrate our connection with God, and our family and friends.