

RE-CENTERED

Thoughts on Pilgrims and their Journey to America

1. **Called:** One thing is certain, in plowing through the spiritual history of the Pilgrims, they could not have gone through what they went through without being called. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. In fact, the greater the gift and calling, the greater and more intense the battle as the enemy wages war against God's plans. There is no question that they were sent by God to a foreign land to establish His purposes. Through unrelenting odds, they were obedient and came to a new land for God, not gold. Little did they know, God was sending them to establish a nation whose destiny would be a "Resting place for the Lord," Ps 132:5,13,14, spoken 55 years earlier by the French Huguenot, Jean Ribault before he was martyred on the shores outside Fort Caroline, Fl. God's purpose took one giant leap forward as they stepped onto the beaches of Cape Cod to establish the colony of Plymouth.
 - a. Rom 11:29 "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."
 - b. 2 Peter 1:10 "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble."
 - c. Phil 3:14 "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."
2. **Committed to Community:** When King James came to the throne, He stated, "The state of the monarchy is the supremest thing on earth; for Kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit on God's throne, but even by God Himself they are called gods."¹ King James called this the "Divine right of King." It did not sit well with John Robinson and a small remnant of people in Scrooby, England. Committed to the Word of God, they began to have church in their homes and the movement began. To that end, they experienced a direct channel of worship to God that shifted the morality and commitment to God and one another amongst the participants. From this reality of Church, they traveled together whether to Holland or to America. Through commitment to Jesus and community, they held together through storms, betrayals, ship-wrecks, illness and death. Community, under the Lordship of Jesus, was an essential value that helped them not only survive but to thrive. The Mayflower Compact reflected this value, "Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick..."²
 - a. 1 Cor 1:10 "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought."
 - b. 1 Thess 5:14 "And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone."
 - c. Romans 12:5 "So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."
3. **Courage/Faith:** Commitment to a cause and deep reverence for the Word of God gave the Pilgrims courage in the face of daunting trials. Trials included betrayal,

¹ Leo Martin, Pilgrim Pursuit of Happiness, First Printing, Honeoye Falls, NY, 2013, pg 3

² Mayflower Compact, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayflower_Compact

imprisonment, and governmental threats when first trying to move to Holland. Setbacks and hurdles that many would not be able to endure marked their journey. Bradford concluded that “The knowledge of the troubles they had overcome in leaving England gave the exiles added courage for the trials which still lay ahead.”³

- a. Heb 11:1 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.”
 - b. 1 Cor 2:5 “That your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”
 - c. Pro 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
4. **Peacemaking Respect:** Pilgrims recognized and operated with respect towards one another. Recognizing the gifts amongst them helped them form the governmental structure that ultimately helped them survive and thrive. Such respect was a vital quality expressed in developing their relationship with the Natives. Within the first year, **the Pilgrims signed the longest lasting peace treaty with the Natives in our nation.**⁴ They held to their agreement even at their own loss.
- a. Matthew 7:12 “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.
 - b. Romans 12:10 “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”
 - c. Philippians 2:3 “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.”
5. **Responsible:** In their first two years in Plymouth, the community lived as a socialistic community with common fields and housing. Such governance was necessary as they needed to build their homes, but also pay back debt due financiers. However, by the third year, they realized the system would not work as labor ethics varied. They were staring starvation in the face. William Bradford changed the dynamics of a socialistic community by each family taking ownership of a plot of ground for which they were responsible.⁵ This turned the community around into a productive, creative community...giving unto one another as there was a need. Taking responsibility motivated people into a free-enterprise system that exploded with creative force and led them into prosperity.
- a. Gen 2:15 “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”
 - b. Eph 6:6-8 “But as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.”
 - c. 1 Cor 3:8 “Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.”

³ Mary Sherwood, Pilgrim: A Biography of William Brewster, Great Oak Press of Virginia Falls Church, VA, 1982, pg 110

⁴ Sherwood, pg. 188.

⁵ Martin, pg 37

- d. 1 Cor 3:14 “If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.”
6. **Value for Family:** There was a significant care for all of the family within the community. Facing so many deaths, those orphaned or widowed would soon find home with those who would care for them. William Brewster actually helped raise William Bradford after parents died and other family connections did not help the call on Bradford’s life. Bradford was like a son to Brewster.
- Eph 6:4 “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”
 - Eph 3:14-21 “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”
 - 1 Cor 13:4-7 “It (love) always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”
7. **Disciplined:** They held one another accountable for actions. This required relational strength and willingness to submit one to another. It also required each one to be diligent in walking in what God called them to do and to be. Gragg notes, “John Billington was disciplined for disrespect toward Captain Standish, and two servants were punished for dueling with each other.”⁶
- 2 Tim 1:7 “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.”
 - Pro 14:23 “In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.”
 - 1 Cor 15:58 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not vain in the Lord.”
8. **Humility:** Pilgrims priority was obedience to God and His Word. It was revelation of God’s Word and His desire to be with His people that caused them to separate from the formed Church of England. They were quick to repent when straying from the precepts of God. Three years into their journey in America, they were hit with a drought. They, along with the Natives, were on the verge of losing their crops. William Bradford called them into a time of 2 Chron 7:14 prayer. They repented for their self-sufficiency and turned back to relying on Jesus. Eight hours into the prayer time, rain began to fall. It rained for two weeks. As a result of these prayers, the Natives who were watching, came to know the Lord and believed in the God the Pilgrims worshiped.
- 1 Peter 5:6-7 “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

⁶ Gragg, Rod. The Pilgrim Chronicles: An Eyewitness History of the Pilgrims and the Founding of Plymouth Colony. Pub Regnery History, 2014. Kindle Edition pg 261 of 350

- b. James 4:6 “But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
 - c. 2 Chron 7:14 “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.
9. **Compassion:** Compassion is God-inspired care for one another. This core value for Pilgrims flowed in their care for one another and for the Natives in the land. when struggling with the plague particularly in the first winter, Pilgrims cared not only for each other, but for the Natives suffering. Compassion released the gift of healing amongst them. Pilgrims heard that Chief Massasoit was on the verge of death. Treading 40 miles into the wilderness, one pilgrim went to minister to him. The chief recovered.
- Unsanctified mercy had no place in the Pilgrim community. They came to America because of biblical values they held dearly. Unsanctified mercy arises when “Compassion becomes compromise and our fear of offending subverts biblical truth.”⁷ Unsanctified mercy is behind abortion, BLM, antifa and other anti-Christian forces in place in our culture.
- a. Colossians 3:12 “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”
 - b. Psalm 23:6 “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”
 - c. Heb 4:16 “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
10. **Perseverance:** From the time they left to the time they arrived and survived through the first very trying winter, the Pilgrims showed a tenacity and commitment to God’s calling. When the Mayflower left to go back to England in April 5, 1621, those who survived stood on the beach to watch its silhouette disappear over the waters. There were none who returned. Sherwood notes, “The men and women who were to be known as the Pilgrims were not easily discouraged.”⁸
- a. Philippians 3:12-14 “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
 - b. Hebrews 12:1 “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”
 - c. 1 Cor 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.
11. **Joy:** One of the most helpful characteristics of leaders, particular in tough times, is positive attitude and joy. “The joy of the Lord is our strength.” In the difficulty of seeing half their company die and many fall ill the first few months of their journey, it is noted by George Morton, “And our people, so many as were in health, worked cheerfully.”⁹

⁷ Charlie Self, “[Unsanctified Mercy: Integrating Compassion and conviction for Human Flourishing.](#),” July 8, 2015.

⁸ Sherwood, pg 154.

⁹ Gragg, Rod, pg 244.

Their encouragement came through the strength and underlying joy the leaders emanated to build up the confidence of the people in difficult and death defying circumstances.

- a. Neh 8:10 “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”
- b. James 1:2-3 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”
- c. Rom 15:13 “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Ultimately, their existence reflected the character Micah relays, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8. Food for a thought for a truly thankful Thanksgiving.
