

20121118_BibleFaithFellowship_bj sermon

Thanksgiving 2012

Call to Worship

Psalm 24:1-10: The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face. Selah.

Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.

Praise and Worship

Praise Reports

Offertory

Scripture Affirmation

Intercessory Prayer and Announcements

*Welcome home, Mercy!

*Connor Goldman—tennis team

*HHCA football team state championship again!

*Israel/Gaza

*Church Thanksgiving Fellowship Supper

*The Giving report by Joe Tokar

Message

The Pilgrims came here seeking to establish religious and personal freedoms, but these freedoms were not given to them when they got here; the Pilgrims had to create these freedoms and to create the structure of government in which to secure these freedoms. And so it was that the Pilgrims developed something called the Mayflower Compact. This was in 1620. To put this into historical context, it was some nine years after the writing, from original manuscripts, and the printing for public distribution, of the King James Bible, 1611, which was suggested in part by the Puritan¹ president, John Reynolds, of Corpus Christi College in England, and written in part to

¹ Puritans were much like Pilgrims.

provide a Bible, an accurate Bible, that was separate and apart from the Roman Catholic Bible.

And, a little history on this season of the Pilgrims, in the panorama of history: Even though we do know that the Pilgrims came to the shores of America seeking to establish religious and personal freedoms, it is critical to understanding the origins of their need for religious freedom, so that we will understand the context in which, 155 years later, the American ideals of religious and personal freedoms were expressed in the Declaration of Independence.

The Pilgrims came here for three main reasons:

- (1) They were persecuted in England because they dissented from participation in the Church of England and they did not agree with or follow its published doctrinal structures of episcopacy and the establishment of a Christian denomination as the official, and mandatory religion of the nation, and therefore, effectively excluding other Christian denominations from participating in the government of the nation.

- (2) Many of them, Dissenters as they came to be called, first went to the Netherlands where such denominational exclusivity was not the law or practice, but they found great difficulty in obtaining work, because the government there, the Dutch government, had very strict laws against the employment of foreigners, the non-Dutch.
- (3) Many of these Dissenters wanted to be able to associate themselves together into doctrinal groups, within the Christian faith.

From the Netherlands, and a few other places in Europe, the Pilgrims made their way through England, gathering up more Dissenters, and sailed to America aboard the Mayflower. Here is a little history of the Mayflower and the trip over to the New England. (READ attachment).

So, before settling in to their new country, they had to figure out how to manage themselves, not just in terms of food and security, and not just in terms of diplomatic relations with the local Indians, but in terms of how they would make the decisions that would determine how they would manage their supplies, their security, their internal code of conduct, their

relationships with the locals and others (like newcomers and like the King of England, and other nations, pirates and other lawless ones), etc.

What they decided is called the Mayflower compact (READ). What is clear about these as the group of men who signed this Compact constituted themselves as “a civil body politic”. Now, what does that mean? Actually, we use some of that phrase today, even though we have shortened the phrase to “body politic”: a “civil body politic” is, even today, a group of persons organized under a single governmental entity that is capable of making decisions. That is really all it means. Thus, our nation, each state, each county, each city, and each town are all, each, a “civil body politic”.

In the Mayflower Compact, these men placed authority in themselves, and thus in democracy by vote rather than by order of a king, the responsibility of making the decisions necessary for them to manage their lives together in this “civil body politic”. Here is what they said as the reason for establishing this “civil body politic”:

For our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid (and we will come back to that); and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices, from time to

time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we all promise our due submission and obedience.

So, they all agreed to be subject to this method of government, with justice and equality for all, and participation by all of these men, to establish government for the general good of the Colony. This was radical, especially for a crowd of mostly Englishmen, who were so culturally accustomed to kingship and its form of centralized government.

Now, we get back to what brings us together again, this Thanksgiving. It is this issue of religious freedom. The Mayflower Compact has an awesome, Christian beginning, not a universalist – any religion, any thing goes – beginning, but a clear, and plainly so, Christian beginning. Look at these words from the Mayflower Compact, *“In the name of God, Amen . . . by the grace of God Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith . . . a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for . . . furtherance of the ends aforesaid”* What is this phrase, “the ends aforesaid”, referring to? It is what was written above: having undertaken, in the name of God and in

the presence of God, and for the Glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith, to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia. Those were the “ends aforesaid”; that is what this venture was all about.

Now, notice, the Mayflower Compact did not say “and to permit Buddhists, atheists, secular humanists, Muslims, Hindus, etc. to come here and advance their faiths”. No, this said, for “the advancement of the Christian faith”! In that context, in that time and place in the panorama of history, the issue and vision were not about allowing religious freedom for a diversity of non-Christian faith systems and world views, but, to the contrary, the issue and the vision were to allow diversity in denominational form within the Christian faith. The Mayflower Compact was not based on the practice of non-Christian religions.

Now, where are we today? We talked about it last week, as the reality of the New American Electorate settled into our knowledge. Some years ago, 2009, it appears that President Obama was right, when he said that America is no longer a Christian nation. At least, that is what the New American Electorate has demonstrated in the 2012 Election. We began this official slide in the infamous decision to forbid public prayer in schools in 1962. This was in the case of *Engle v.*

Vitale, 370 U.S. 421, in which the US Supreme Court held that it was unconstitutional for government officials to provide an official school prayer and encourage or mandate that students say or recite it. That was the beginning of the slide downhill in our laws, nationally, into the vomit of ***Leviticus 20:22-23***. When America took prayer out of public schools, it showed that the secular humanists of The Humanist Manifesto, in its several versions, had succeeded in removing the keystone of Christ from the education of our children, and of the succeeding generations of our children. That slide gathered momentum for fifty years, 1962-2012, and it culminated in the Election 2012, when, those children, educated without Christ in the public and now increasingly out of the private schools and colleges, constituted themselves as the New American Electorate and voted. They in effect voted out the Mayflower Compact and finished the work of Lincoln regarding State's Rights and the Tenth Amendment. And, as we reviewed last week, this New American Electorate has, in 2012, pushed America, including its old ladies in wheel chairs, right off the cliff! America is now controlled by and led by its New American Electorate, and America no longer is secured to, or by, the foundation of Christ on which it was established. America is now fully adrift, almost powerless, and certainly

rudderless, in a world of secularism, irresponsible hedonism, lawlessness, covetousness, deceit, and debt– a world in which the New American Electorate, and those whom it elected, no longer know, or acknowledge, or base decisions on, the Truth which is, and is in, Christ Jesus. Like, the old Virginia Slims ad, “We’ve come a long way, baby!” And, in the parlance of the drug culture, “it’s a bad trip!” I must tell you today, as I did last week, that the Holy Spirit assures us that this trip will get worse.

Now, at this Thanksgiving 2012, as we think about the Pilgrims in their 1621 Thanksgiving², I cannot help but think about Richard Warren, the 12th signer of the Mayflower Compact, who is my wife’s ancestor. Today, on the cusp of Thanksgiving 2012, as we think about the New America which the New American Electorate has wrested from the Christians of America, I cannot help but think of Mr. Warren’s descendants, including my wife and two of my children, and about our nieces and nephews and about our grandchildren and grand-nieces and grand-nephews yet to come. In this Thanksgiving 2012, it is a fair question to ask why have I fast-forwarded us to today in our thinking? It is a fair question to

² There is not a clear historical record of the exact date of the Pilgrims’ first Thanksgiving, and much is based on legend and myth, but many suggestions in the historical record point to 1621, after the fall harvest.

ask, “ why can’t we just continue to celebrate our Turkey Day like we always have?” After all, Thanksgiving used to be kind of perfunctory: We were thankful to be Americans and to be living in a Christian nation. Historically, our Thanksgiving afforded us a kind of smugness, in our American-ness and in our Christian-ness. That smugness is gone!

The answer is because, from November 6, 2012, and thenceforth, we live in a New America and a new world, and it is a far more dangerous place, for us, for our children and our grandchildren, for Richard Warren’s descendants, and for the children after them to come. It is because this New America, this new world order that is being brought about partly through the decisions of the New American Electorate and those whom it has recently elected, rejects Christianity unless it is the form of Christianity identified in ***Revelation 17 and 18*** as the Harlot Church, or the false church. This New American Electorate and this New America rejects Christians who are part of the true church, those who, ***Revelation 18:4*** are truly God’s people. So, I have fast-forwarded us to 2012, all the way from 1621, or thereabouts, because the foundations of this Thanksgiving or not what they were when Mr. Warren put pen to paper in 1620 and signed the Mayflower Compact. Mr. Warran and his fellow sojourners, aliens as Christians in the

Old World, came bravely to the new world and dug deep in their souls and spirits and with the sacrifices of their bodies to establish the New World, the first part of the then New America. That New America is now the Old America; that New America has passed away. What we have is a mere shell of form where the substance used to be.

The question for us is not whether we are in this New New America, but how it is that we are going to live here. Our challenge is to live in this New New America with joy, peace and contentment: in a word, to live with thanksgiving in all things and in all circumstances, counting the troubles and tribulations of this New New America as joy, all joy, as we trust in God and obey Him today and in the days to come.

We are all called to Christ, in the purposes of God, and, **1 Timothy 2:4**, He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (Jesus). To answer that call, we must be strong and courageous. In a word, we must learn bravery, and we must learn how to be and to live bravely. Courage and bravery is meaningless if we are unwilling to suffer, even unto death, for our convictions. In Christ, we are convinced that we were convicted by the law of sin, and that its wages are death. In Christ, we are saved; in Him we have the hope that does not disappoint, no matter the circumstances.

We live now in a New New America, in a new world, but one that is a cowardly new world, a world where bullies abound, wrapped in a government uniform, a world where, like Christians were in 1620 in the Old World, Christians are today, and will be much more so in the future, persecuted because they don't believe in, or subscribe to, the religious views of the government.

Today, like the Pilgrims, we have much to do, much to test us, and not little else to work with but our faith, our prayers and our will. Our bodies are mere tools, **Romans 12:1**, and like Paul, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."* In this passage, see and understand that your "reasonable service" is the "presentation" of your bodies as a "living sacrifice". This is the core of the call to bravery, courage and strength in this Thanksgiving 2012. Most Americans, most Christians, even in the true church, are not brave and have not taught themselves how to be brave! Without such bravery, courage and strength, in this day and in the years to come, you will not sustain joy, peace and contentment in your circumstances, whatever they are, and whatever they may come to be, even coming at the hands of the government.

In this day and season of Thanksgiving, 2012, **Romans 2:17-18**, “*Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*” Be mindful of the service heart of compassion shown in **Matthew 25** and **James 1:27**, all in the practice of true religion, by true Christians in the true church.

Today, we are thankful to be Americans, but more importantly, we are thankful for Christ, that we are and may be, and may bring others to become, Christians. We, as Christians have our issues with the New New America, and its New American Electorate, true. But God is using this to test us. Remember the prophetic word in **Haggai 2:5-7**, “*According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!*” For thus says the Lord of hosts, “*Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations (Jesus), and I will fill this temple with glory,*” says the Lord of hosts. God is in the Shaking Business. He is the mover and the shaker. Prepare for the shaking, amongst all nations. It will take a heart of thanksgiving and a will steeled with bravery in the knowledge, **Philippians 1:21**, that “*to live is Christ; to die is gain*”, in order for us to be who He created us to be. We have

purposed ourselves, as did the Pilgrims, to live and be on the cutting edge of what God is doing in our generation. Be thankful for His calling, His provision, His strength, His wisdom, His mercy, His healing. Let Him lift your arms when weary. We are called to fight, yes, in this time of Thanksgiving, but it is not in our strength or might that we will prevail. God will prevail because, **2 Chronicles 20:15**, *“And he said, ‘Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the Lord to you: Do not be afraid or dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s.”* Abide in Jesus, **John 15**, and choose to convert your fears into trusting, faithful thanksgiving. Thanksgiving 2012 is a good time, a good place in history, for a new L/D (in military terms, a line of departure), a new day, a new season, for our lives as Christians.

God bless you and amen+