

By the time you hear this I hope you are gathered with family and friends to enjoy turkey and perhaps watch a football game. Thanksgiving is, as the name says, a day to give thanks for the blessings that come our way. When did that begin? ~~Giving thanks to a Higher power for simple blessings?~~ It *most likely would have* been thousands of years ago at a place like Stonehenge or Gobeckli Tepe, when one of our ancestors erected a totem or altar to their deity, giving thanks for a harvest that would feed the tribe, or a successful hunt that would fend off starvation.

Our modern Thanksgiving holiday traces its origins to a 1621 celebration by Pilgrims at the Plymouth Plantation, ~~where those early settlers held a harvest feast after a successful growing season.~~

Squanto, a Patuxet Native American who resided with the Wampanoag tribe, taught the Pilgrims how to catch eel and grow corn and served as an interpreter for these desperate early settlers ~~(Squanto had learned English while enslaved in Europe and during travels in England).~~

Additionally the Wampanoag leader Massasoit had donated food stores to the fledgling colony during the first winter when supplies brought from England were insufficient. So, the Pilgrims set apart a day to celebrate at Plymouth immediately after their first harvest, in 1621.

That feast lasted three days, providing enough food for 13 Pilgrims and 90 Native Americans. The feast consisted of fish and shellfish, wild fowl (including turkey), venison, berries and fruit, vegetables, like peas and of course, pumpkin, harvest grains and the Three Sisters: beans, dried Indian corn and squash.

Thanksgiving Day officially became a national tradition in 1863, when during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of thanksgiving to be celebrated on Thursday, November 26. In 1941 it became a federal holiday.

I think ~~few of us in America~~ today can fully ^{appreciate} understand the conditions of that first Thanksgiving. Food never tastes so good as when it is ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ desperately short supply. ~~And I~~ imagine President Lincoln officially instituting a national day of thanks right in the middle of our bloodiest war—proving that things do not have to be perfect to give thanks.

^{more} Several points about Thanksgiving ~~are worthy of reflection.~~

First, harvest festivals had existed in English and Wampanoag tradition before 1621, so

Thanksgiving traces its roots back to both European and Native American rituals. ^{the beginning of the human race.}

Second, the peaceful relations between the earliest Pilgrims and the Wampanoag tribe are worth noting. Sadly, peace did not always prevail. ^{which leads to my 3rd point:}

~~Third,~~ had it not been for the benevolence of the Native Americans like Squanto, the earliest settlements of Europeans on American soil would have failed, dramatically and tragically.

Fourth and finally: we should not give thanks because we have so much, but because we have what is essential.

For friends, family, freedom of speech and faith, for clean water, abundant amounts of food, ~~a policeman who does not take bribes, a clear understanding of our rights and responsibilities.~~ I for one, give thanks—and hope you do too. ^{and Community beauty of North Coast}

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment

~~No one can force you to be thankful. So, I won't force Thanksgiving down your throat... it must be freely chosen.~~