MARK & FRIENDS

Remembering Pilgrims, Part 1: Faith, Perseverance, and Thanksgiving

Wednesday, November 25, 2026 | Ministry Package V5.1
Host: Mark Burns | Featured presentation: Remembering Pilgrims

Program Summary

Mark Burns introduces the first two segments of Remembering Pilgrims, a Moody Broadcasting Network documentary blending interviews, historical readings, sounds, and dramatized scenes. The program follows the Pilgrims from religious persecution and exile to the Mayflower crossing, the Mayflower Compact, and a devastating first winter. It considers their dependence on God, the sacrificial care offered by fellow passengers, and the indispensable knowledge and help of the Wampanoag people, including Squanto. This Thanksgiving presentation invites the listening friend to practice gratitude, perseverance, and practical love.

Key Takeaways

- Faith does not remove hardship; it gives me someone to trust through it.
- The Pilgrims left familiar surroundings seeking freedom to worship according to their convictions.
- The documentary presents the Mayflower Compact as a commitment to ordered community and the common good.
- The first winter brought illness, grief, and losses that should not be overlooked when remembering Thanksgiving.
- Those who cared for the sick demonstrated love through exhausting, ordinary acts of service.
- Wampanoag knowledge and assistance were essential to the settlers' survival; Indigenous people had their own histories, communities, and losses.
- The account of Squanto includes displacement and bereavement as well as his help to the newcomers.
- Gratitude can lead me to acknowledge help, care for a neighbor, and depend more fully on God.

Scripture References

- John 11:24 — Martha's hope in the resurrection is quoted in a dramatized burial scene.
- 2 Timothy 1:12 — echoed in Bradford's words about knowing whom they had believed.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 — companion reading: prayer and thanksgiving in every circumstance.
- Galatians 6:2 — companion reading: carrying one another's burdens.
- 1 John 3:16-18 — companion reading: loving with actions and in truth.
- Hebrews 11:13-16 — companion reading: faith and the hope of a better country.

Quote of the Day

“What could now sustain them but the spirit of God and his grace?” — William Bradford, as read in the documentary

Broadcast Notes

This November 25 presentation contains segments one and two of Remembering Pilgrims; Mark introduces segments three and four for the following day. The documentary is credited on air to the Moody Broadcasting Network. Its interviews, titles, locations, and historical interpretations reflect the archival production. Narration and reconstructed dialogue accompany historical quotations; the dramatic scenes are not recordings of the original events. Period language is retained within the quoted historical readings. Companion Scripture readings and ministry applications are supplied for reflection and are distinguished from passages heard in the broadcast. A brief hymn excerpt is marked without reproducing its words; the supplied transcript does not identify its title. Unclear source wording is flagged rather than guessed.

Practical Applications

- Thank God for one specific mercy I might otherwise take for granted.
- Name a difficult circumstance and bring it honestly to God in prayer.
- Offer practical help to someone who is ill, grieving, or overwhelmed.
- Acknowledge a person whose knowledge or kindness has helped me.
- Listen carefully to another person’s history, including suffering I may not have considered.
- Keep a promise that strengthens trust in my family, church, or community.
- Read John 11:24 in context and reflect on the hope Jesus offers in grief.
- Let a Thanksgiving conversation include both gratitude and compassionate remembrance.

Today's Challenge

Before the day ends, thank God for one person who has helped you, then express that gratitude through a note, a call, or a practical act of kindness.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for Your faithfulness in seasons of uncertainty. Help me trust You when the way is difficult and remember the people whose care has sustained me. Give me a grateful heart, a teachable spirit, and compassion for those whose suffering I have overlooked. Show me one person I can serve with practical love. May my words and actions honor Jesus today. In His name I pray, amen.

About Today's Speaker

Remembering Pilgrims

A special presentation of the Moody Broadcasting Network

This archival documentary brings together historical narration, readings, reconstructed scenes, and interviews with historians and interpreters. The broadcast includes perspectives from Plymouth-area museums and historical organizations, Peter Marshall, and Wampanoag interpreter Jonathan Perry. Mark Burns introduces this first installment on Mark & Friends. The supplied transcript does not identify the documentary's narrator by name.

Featured on Mark & Friends - Listen anytime under the Mark & Friends tab at GreatNewsRadio.org or WLUJ.org.

About Today's Host

Mark Burns

Host of Mark & Friends

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. With decades of experience in Christian radio and ministry, he presents Scripture-centered programs intended to educate, edify, and evangelize.

Additional Ministry Resources

- Mark & Friends Program Resource Library
- Great News Radio
- WLUJ
- John 11:17-27 - resurrection hope
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 - thanksgiving
- Galatians 6:2 - bearing burdens

Complete Proofread Transcript

Today and tomorrow, you'll hear an innovative broadcast called Remembering Pilgrims, capturing the sounds of the water where the pilgrims first landed, the creaks and groans of the Mayflower II, picture with me a colorful palette of engaging interviews, authentic hymns from the era, and dramatic vignettes, all painting a picture of American history that is profoundly moving and distinctly Christian. Here's the first installment of Remembering Pilgrims. They were the original boat people, common folks, common faith, with an uncommon mission.

[Historical hymn excerpt; title not identified in the supplied transcript.] Now, now we part.

Perhaps never to see each other again in this life. As the oceans are the works of his fingers, may he hold you in the palms of his hands. Their names are the stuff of monuments and markers.

William Brewster, Miles Standish, Edward Winslow. They were Englishmen in exile, intimidated, interrogated, imprisoned. This because of a faith at odds with the Church of England.

Under increasing harassment, the separatists, as they were branded, ran out of options. Hundreds migrated from Nottinghamshire, England to Holland with great difficulty. There they lived for 12 years.

Fearing an impending war with Spain, weary of cultural oppression, they sold their homes and possessions to board an unimpressive ship called the Mayflower. Tears mixed with tide as the Mayflower left harbor in 1620. Find a spit sail on the bowsprit. [Wording unclear in supplied transcript.]

Tis done, Cap. Put a top sail in his in. [Wording unclear in supplied transcript.] Ready as you are, Ed.

Shadowing the Mayflower was a smaller vessel, the Speedwell, carrying about 30 pilgrims. Not far at sea, the 30-ton vessel began to leak. Turning back, the ship was repaired and a second departure was attempted, but without success.

Understandably frightened, some families decided the venture was too great and went ashore. Others were welcomed aboard the already crowded Mayflower, and the journey was on. In celebration of Thanksgiving, Moody Broadcasting presents Remembering Pilgrims.

One of the most interesting things about the Mayflower voyage is how little is known about it, for something which is so important to the history of the United States. Carolyn Travers is research manager at Massachusetts Plymouth Plantation. They probably were seasick, a good part of it.

There's, of course, the danger of going overboard. Michelle Pecoraro, also of Plymouth Plantation. When the weather was good, they could go up and get a breath of fresh air, but for the most part they stayed below decks, so they were out of the way of the crew.

The crew has something to do. The passengers have nothing. You're just spending time waiting to get where you're going.

The important thing to remember is that there was a working crew of sailors and mariners and a couple of pilots on the ship. Michael Hall is a historian with the Plymouth Plantation. They didn't really have very much to do at all, and so probably spent a lot of time down in what's called the orlop of the ship, between the main deck and the hold, in their little partitioned areas with their family, probably fairly dark, damp, hot when they first set sail, maybe cold and sharp later on, wet.

Those who could read would read if they had enough light. The kids played games of the period. The Bible was certainly something that they would read to each other.

There was a lot of reading out loud. So much for filling their time, but with what do they fill their dinner plates? Ship's biscuit, which is a very hardtack type of bread. Peas porridge, which is a mixture of dried peas and cornmeal.

The food that you eat on a ship, it's largely the food that you eat on a ship, because it's dried or it's salted. So it's not necessarily the tastiest stuff, perhaps, but that which keeps best. Our conversation with Michelle Pecoraro was actually taped on board the Mayflower II, a full-scale replica of what historians believe the Pilgrim ship to have resembled.

The ship is open to the public and is anchored just a few hundred feet from Plymouth Rock. This Mayflower II, the replica, the reproduction, was built based on what we knew of sailing vessels, merchant vessels at the time. So while we don't know what the actual Mayflower looked like, and in fact there were probably many ships named the Mayflower because there wasn't any regulation on what you called your ship and Mayflower was a very popular name.

We know that this is, by scale and size, pretty close to what would have been the Mayflower that the Pilgrims traveled across the water on. The Mayflower, fast facts. According to marine archaeologists, the Mayflower was at least 12 years old when she sailed for New England.

The ship had a long history in wine trade with France. Ironically, the sterilizing properties of alcohol leaked over many voyages helped keep bacteria and sickness at a minimum during the Pilgrim crossing. The Mayflower was captained by Christopher Jones, who was also a quarter owner of the vessel.

At 90 feet long, 26 feet wide, and a hull depth of 11 feet, the Mayflower weighed 180 tons. A fully loaded 747 jetliner is nearly two and a half times as long and two and a half times as heavy. But only the Mayflower had cannons, 12 to be precise.

Standing in the darkness of the Mayflower II's passenger deck with its low ceiling and cramped quarters, other questions come to mind. How did they take a bath? There wasn't a lot of that going on. You know, bathing even when they weren't on board a ship wasn't something that they did on a regular basis the way we think of it today.

102 passengers and a crew of 26, all living on a boat that would fit in many of our backyards. There had to have been complaints, such as... Most likely just the fact that it was close quarters and, you know, the personalities just as they are today are all different. The other thing was the weather was not very good on the crossing for a good part of the time.

Although routes were known and there were many experienced crews and mariners that had been to the New World, to Virginia, to Newfoundland, to New England, fishing or otherwise, these ventures both for the people who would travel to these wild and wonderful new places and as well their financial backers was very, very risky. For the one, it could mean their lives, and for the other, it could mean their money. It is by far the worst storm yet on this ocean.

The wind's so fierce. I'm surprised the Mayflower holds any course at all. And I remastered Jones at the helm. [Wording unclear in supplied transcript.]

We hold our course. Go! First off is the lift! [Wording unclear in supplied transcript.] Man overboard! Man overboard! That man overboard was John Howland, a hired servant of John Carver's. As the boat pitched violently, rolling Howland off the deck, he had the presence of mind to grab the top sail ropes dangling in the water.

Holding on for life, he defied death. Just who were these people that traded their farms, their homes, their lives for such an uncertain future? The pilgrims, all of them, would have identified themselves as Christians. They were English Christians who loved Jesus with all their hearts, plain, ordinary, simple English farmers.

Peter Marshall is the son of a former U.S. Senate chaplain and has co-written The Light and the Glory, an early history of the United States. They were very well educated and brought more books than any other single commodity on board the Mayflower. The particular band that we've come to really identify with as the pilgrims, Brownists or Separatists, they may have been considered outlandish or a little bit off the mean.

They were Separatists, which was a fairly radical sect for that period. Jim Baker is a published authority on early American history. They were Separatists, which unnerved other people.

Even the Massachusetts Puritans looked askance at those guys down in Plymouth who were Separatists, because at a time when church and state are one, that you choose to physically separate yourself from the Church of England, you're also committing treason. The one misunderstanding of the Pilgrim story that strikes me over and over is that people come to Plymouth thinking that they're going to see a story about a quaint, old-fashioned group of people. They don't realize just how radical and cutting-edge the Pilgrims were for their time.

Peggy Baker is curator for the Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth. They were on the cutting edge of a religious reformation that changed the face of European history. They were on the edge of a European movement of migration to America that changed this continent, that changed the course of world history.

But they thought about risk-taking in a far different way than we did. When these people got on the Mayflower and came over here, they were jumping off the edge of the known world. The Pilgrims clearly understood the risky nature of their venture.

Their leading spokesman, William Bradford, recorded his firsthand observations in an epic he titled Of Plymouth Plantation. It was by many thought an adventure most desperate, a misery worse than death. But these things did not dismay them, though they did sometimes trouble them, for their desires were set on the ways of God and to enjoy His ordinances.

But they rested on His providence and knew whom they had believed. Remembering Pilgrims is a special presentation of the Moody Broadcasting Network. Thanks for listening to this two-day special during Mark and Friends.

Here's segment two, and tomorrow we'll close out with three and four. November 9, 1620. Daybreak.

The Pilgrims sighted the highlands of Cape Cod. They were nearly 500 miles off course from their destination, Virginia. Exactly where were they? Provincetown, Massachusetts.

The Pilgrims' arrival is memorialized today by a granite monument, the tallest of its kind in the United States. Ironically, it celebrates a slice of history that most Americans know very little about. Laurel Gadesno, historian and curator.

We're on the top of High Pole Hill in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and we're looking out at Provincetown Harbor where the Mayflower Pilgrims first landed in 1620. They only spent about five weeks in the local area, and that's why this history is often overlooked. After 67 days at sea, what's the first thing the Pilgrims might have done? The first thing that they did was come into the harbor here, and then on Saturday, November 11, probably one of the most important things that happened in the harbor here was that they wrote and signed the Mayflower Compact.

There was some discord on board a ship. Some people were talking about mutiny and leaving the group. So the leaders of the group decided right then and there that they needed to come up with a document, and it really was the first democratic document written in this country that said they would abide by the rule of the majority.

In the name of God, amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign, Lord King James, by the grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King. Having undertaken for the glory of God an advancement of the Christian faith and the honor of our king and country a voyage.

When the Pilgrims gathered in the captain's cabin of the Mayflower to sign the Mayflower Compact, the interesting thing about that little one-page document is that they say that we do, by those present solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and of one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic. So the whole understanding was that Christians need to join together and make this covenant with each other and with God, put the Bible into practice to live out the Christian life together, to help one another live out the Christian life. That was the vision at the heart of the Plymouth colony, the heart of the Pilgrims' lives, and really the vision that founded this nation.

The Mayflower Compact itself was uniting now individuals who were believers, part of the Pilgrim Separatist Church, and those who were not believers. Paul Jehle is Education Director for the Plymouth Rock Foundation, an organization dedicated to preserving the Pilgrim story. Thus, you had Christians and non-Christians signing a civil compact that said its purpose was to advance the Christian faith.

But how do you, advance the Christian faith? Does it force people to believe in Christ? No. A civil government advances the Christian faith by protecting the rights that are given by God, by protecting those. And so it was a protection of the common good, a protection of each individual right, and particularly the protection of self-government under God that was the way that civil government would advance a Christian faith.

November 12th, 1620. It's Sunday. But rather than rush ashore for their first taste of New England, the Pilgrims make an alternate choice.

What always surprises me is that they still stayed aboard the ship, and they spent the day in prayer and thanksgiving for having arrived safely across the ocean. Looking down on the breezy harbor where the Mayflower once anchored, Laurel Gadasno ponders their principle. They really wanted to pray and thank God for having arrived safely in the New World.

And it had been a tough voyage. And so I think it speaks to the depth of their faith that they didn't rush ashore, that they stayed and worshipped and then went ashore the next day. That's about as far as we can row.

We'll have to get out and pull the boat ashore. Finally dry, grand, solid footing at last time. But not before we wade the waters through the shore.

No need to mention it. I feel the cold already. But you haven't put in so much as a toe.

Being mid-November, the Pilgrims' first landing offered more chills than thrills. We're standing here on a lovely, pleasant day, and it's probably 75 degrees and a very mild breeze. But if we were out here in November, we'd be bundled up.

It would be damp. The wind would be blowing. And this harbor has huge tides, about nine-foot tides.

And they talk about wading on shore. So can you imagine that? Can you imagine wading to the shore in November, how cold and wet they must have been? I can't imagine what it must have been like. In the story of the Pilgrims, few geographic points are as symbolic as Plymouth Rock.

But Plymouth was more than 20 miles across the bay from where the Pilgrims originally landed. Carolyn Travers recounts how and why the Pilgrims left Provincetown. When they arrived, it was November, and November in New England can be very cold and very wet.

So they arrived on the Outer Cape, and of course, that's mostly sand with some trees, but not good farmland, not the sort of place you'd want to actually set up a colony. And they sent men out exploring. And then a little bit later on, they were out in the shallop actually, sailing around in the area until they finally found Plymouth.

And that was several weeks. When they came ashore, Native Americans had been settled in Plymouth. They had already cleared the land.

So it was just a great spot for them to settle, a river so they knew that they would have fresh water at all times, land already cleared, a nice deep harbor where they could anchor their boat. They were very lucky. Yes, they were blessed.

But even with these advantages, the Pilgrims were against the odds. They had left Europe later than planned. The Speedwell failure lost them more time.

Finding Plymouth cost a total of five weeks. So by the time they actually set up in Plymouth and started building houses, it was just about the end of December. So they are trying to build houses in the worst time of the year to try to build houses.

The difficulty was not lost on William Bradford, who wrote in Plymouth Plantation, Being thus past the vast ocean and the sea of troubles before in the preparation, they had now no friends to welcome them, nor inns to entertain them or refresh their weather-beaten bodies. No houses or much less towns to repair to. For the season it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, subject to cruel and fierce storms.

What could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness full of wild beasts and wild men? For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a weather-beaten face. The whole country full of woods and thickets represented a wild and savage hue. What could now sustain them but the spirit of God and his grace? Winter at Plymouth, their first, and for many their last.

Unable to construct sufficient housing on shore, the majority of the pilgrims continued to live on board the Mayflower, but their bodies were weak from the journey and not accustomed to the harshness of New England winds. But that which was most sad and lamentable was that in two or three months' time half of their company died especially in January and February. In the depth of winter, wandering houses and other comforts being infected with scurvy and other diseases which this long voyage and their inaccommodant condition had brought upon them.

So as there died sometimes two or three of a day that of one hundred and odd persons, scarcely fifty remained. From the moment they stepped foot on shore, the pilgrims were vastly outnumbered by the native populations. The pilgrims feared for their lives, which meant they disposed of their dead with special care.

At night, under cover of darkness, the bodies were buried in Cole's Hill less than one hundred yards from Plymouth Rock. And so in this darkness, we quietly commend him to the keeping of God, knowing that in the last day he shall stand As Martha wept over Lazarus, we recall her confidence and say, I know he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day. The graves were immediately filled and smoothed over, a kind of winter camouflage that the Indians might not discover how great their losses were and how few of them remained.

By the time spring arrived, only twelve of the original heads of house were alive, and most of the women were dead. Only six or seven pilgrims were healthy enough to assist the others. Bradford recalls that these Spared no pains night nor day, but with abundance of toil, in hazard of their own health, fetched them wood, made them fires, dressed them meat, made their beds, washed their loathsome clothes.

In a word, did all the homely and necessary offices for them which dainty and queasy stomachs cannot endure. And all this willingly and cheerfully, without any grudging in the least, showing here in their true love unto their friends and brethren, a rare example and worthy to be remembered. And I doubt not that their recompense is with the Lord.

Winter finally surrendered and spring triumphed, but even with a friendlier season, a fierce foe continued nipping at their heels. Hunger. Everything about New England was new, including food gathering.

Even fishing is different here, eh? Mm, aye. Public shop! [Wording unclear in supplied transcript.] I have a fish! So you do! Oh, spoken too quickly. The fish is gone, see? I see very well.

From farming to fishing, the Pilgrims were novices, desperately in need of a seasoned expert. One of the most amazing miracle stories in American history is the story of the Patuxet Indian, who literally saved the Pilgrims' lives. Mind you, they were heading for a warmer climate further south, and they were English yeoman farmers who had no more idea how to live in a howling New England wilderness in the dead of winter than fly to the moon.

Jonathan Perry agrees with Peter Marshall's assessment. I don't think that they would have survived at all. A Wampanoag descendant himself, Jonathan is site supervisor for Plymouth Plantation's native program.

He recalls the words of a sachem, or king, who observed the struggling Pilgrims. There was a Wampanoag sachem from one of the more southern native communities who said, look at these people, they're pale, they're sickly, they're dying, they're like children and need us to keep them alive. I don't believe that they would have survived lacking the knowledge of the food resources here and the different environment, the difference in the climate and so on.

They just lacked the knowledge of how to live in this region. Peter Marshall picks up the story. In March of 1621, they were in a desperate situation because all the food they'd brought on board the Mayflower was now gone.

An Indian suddenly appeared clad only in a loincloth and said in English, welcome Englishman, which must've been a bit of a surprise. They found out his name was Samoset and he had been wintering over with the Wampanoag Indians 40, 50 miles away. He went back to them after spending the night with the Pilgrims and told another Indian, this was Squanto, about this band of English trying to eke out an existence on the site of his old village.

Squanto, unlike his friend Samoset, is able to speak much more than a greeting, but the question is not how did Squanto come by his English, it's how did the English come by Squanto? The answer is a story that only underscores truth as stranger than fiction. In 1605, Squanto was one of five Indians captured and taken back to England. They would be taught English so they could give explorers valuable information about hunting, fishing, trapping and trading in America.

In March of 1614, Squanto was part of a two-ship expedition to New England, as close to home as he'd been in nine years, but in a strange twist of events, Squanto was double-crossed by one of the captains, placed in irons and sailed to Malaga, Spain, where he was put up for sale as a slave. Local monks took pity and purchased Squanto and some of the others where they lived for a year or two, exposed to the fundamentals

of Christianity. Ultimately, Squanto found his way back to England and in 1619, he sailed to Maine and finally home to Massachusetts.

One can only imagine the emotions that swirled about him as he took a familiar path home. Almost, almost there, almost at the... No, where are my people? What happened? There's no one here. Where are they? Where are my people? When he got back here to the site of his old village, he received the shock of his life.

He found that in the years he had been gone, a plague had come and killed everyone in the tribe, men, women and children, nothing left but bones and ruins. Massasoit takes him in and there he is when Samoset comes back from Plymouth here, bearing this tale of the strange English trying to eke out an existence on the site of Squanto's old village. Suddenly, Squanto has a new reason to live.

God provided this Indian who spoke English, who understood all about Englishmen and who understood the Christian faith, the right man in the right place at the right time. He literally saved their lives. Remembering Pilgrims is a special presentation of the Moody Broadcasting Network.