MARK & FRIENDS

Remembering Pilgrims, Part 2: A Thankful Heart All Year Long

Thursday, November 26, 2026 | Ministry Package V5.1
Host: Mark Burns | Featured presentation: Remembering Pilgrims

Program Summary

On Thanksgiving Day, Mark Burns presents segments three and four of Remembering Pilgrims, the concluding installment of the Moody Broadcasting Network special. Interviews, historical readings, music, and dramatic scenes explore daily work, worship, William Bradford's faith, the grist mill, economic burdens, and the homes of John Howland and John Alden. The documentary closes with its account of the harvest celebration shared by Pilgrims and Wampanoag people and a call to faithful Christian commitment. Mark encourages the listening friend to carry a thankful spirit beyond the busyness of the holiday.

Key Takeaways

- Thanksgiving can become a daily habit rather than a single date on the calendar.
- Ordinary tasks such as preparing food, gathering wood, and caring for a household reveal the perseverance required by early colonial life.
- The documentary describes worship and Scripture as central to the Pilgrims' understanding of their lives.
- Conveniences I easily overlook can prompt fresh gratitude for daily provision and the work of others.
- The broadcast's account of long financial obligations reminds me that difficult responsibilities require patience and steady effort.
- Remembering Thanksgiving includes acknowledging the Wampanoag people and the knowledge and assistance of Squanto.
- Christian commitment calls me to trust God beyond familiar comforts and serve faithfully where He leads.
- A small act of faithfulness can encourage others, just as one candle can light another.

Scripture References

- 2 Corinthians 11:26-27 — echoed in Bradford's closing historical reading about journeys, dangers, weariness, and hardship.
- Esther 4:14 — alluded to in the documentary's description of Bradford as born "for such a time as this."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 — companion reading: prayer and thanksgiving in every circumstance.
- Colossians 3:17 — companion reading: honoring Jesus and giving thanks in words and actions.
- Luke 9:23 — companion reading: following Jesus with daily commitment.
- Matthew 5:14-16 — companion reading: allowing my light to point others to God.

Quote of the Day

“And as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto our whole nation. Let the glorious name of Jehovah have all the praise.” — William Bradford, as read in the documentary

Broadcast Notes

This Thanksgiving Day edition concludes the two-day Remembering Pilgrims presentation with segments three and four. Segments one and two aired November 25. Mark Burns introduces and closes the program; the documentary is credited to the Moody Broadcasting Network. Interviews, reconstructed dialogue, historical readings, and period-relative descriptions are preserved as broadcast, including the documentary’s interpretations of history. Museum roles and descriptions belong to the archival production. Scripture allusions are distinguished from companion readings supplied for reflection. The opening musical selection is “Christmas Time’s a-Comin’”; the performer is not identified in the supplied transcript, and lyrics are omitted. An Ainsworth Psalter hymn is discussed, but its individual title is not supplied. Mark announces Christmas music for the following edition. Unclear transcription is flagged rather than replaced with guessed words.

Practical Applications

- Begin a simple list of three daily mercies and thank God for each one.
- Thank someone whose ordinary work makes my life easier.
- Set aside a few quiet minutes for Scripture and prayer amid holiday activity.
- Choose one responsibility I have been avoiding and take a faithful next step.
- Remember the people who helped provide the food and welcome I enjoy.
- Let a conversation about history include careful listening and respect for the people whose stories are being told.
- Ask God where I need to obey Him beyond my comfort zone.
- Encourage one person with a word or act of kindness that points toward Jesus.

Today's Challenge

Carry Thanksgiving into tomorrow: write down one mercy, thank one person, and take one practical step of obedience to Jesus.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the daily gifts I so easily overlook. Slow my hurried heart and teach me to recognize Your provision in ordinary life. Help me honor the work and kindness of others, remember the lessons of the past with humility, and follow Jesus with steady courage. Give me a thankful spirit throughout the year. Let the light of Christ shine through my words and actions, so that You receive the praise. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

About Today's Speaker

Remembering Pilgrims

A special presentation of the Moody Broadcasting Network

The concluding installment of this archival documentary combines narration, historical readings, recreated scenes, and interviews about Pilgrim faith and daily life. Voices identified in the supplied transcript include Carolyn Travers, mill operator Leo Martin, curator Susan Shaw, Jim Baker, Paul Jehle, and Peter Marshall. Their roles and descriptions reflect the original production. Mark Burns presents segments three and four on Mark & Friends.

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
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 - thanksgiving
- Colossians 3:17 - gratitude in word and deed
- Matthew 5:14-16 - let your light shine

Complete Proofread Transcript

[Opening musical selection: “Christmas Time’s a-Comin’.” Performer not identified in the supplied transcript. Lyrics omitted.]

Christmas time's a comin' and you may be sayin', Mark, yesterday you had a Thanksgiving special. Yes, and we're gonna continue it today, and I think because of the busyness of the season, the hustle and bustle, the running around, and we wanna keep that thankful spirit all year long. So I hope you'll appreciate this Moody special, and then on tomorrow, I'll introduce some Christmas music.

And those of you that were tuned in yesterday, I know really enjoyed the various vignettes, engaging interviews, authentic hymns from the era, all creatively put together with the sounds of the pilgrim's first landing. Well, we'll continue right where we left off with parts three and four of this Thanksgiving special, titled Remembering Pilgrims. Row after row, hour after hour, day after day.

It is no small work, this. Who could have known planting corn was such a labor? What was it like to work as those early pilgrims worked? We get some idea from these interpreters, or re-enactors, at the Plymouth Plantation, who spoke with our producer. Whatcha workin' on, sir? Oh, I'm cobbling, presently, stitching a new sole onto these shoes.

And do you make the leather for the soles yourselves? Oh, no, we get it all sent from England, though. The frayed is sent from England. Piles are sent from England. [Wording unclear in supplied transcript.]

Clothing, shoeing, butter, spices, most things are sent from England, that you'll find here. Looks like oak. There's two kinds of oak in the country.

That we call red oak, and then white oak. Tell me, what's different about this country than the old England? How much time you got? There's nothing the same about it. I saw more trees in the first half hour I was here than my whole life before coming here.

The climate is very sharp. Never have I seen heat like this before coming here. That's a large mallet you have there.

It is, sir. It's a beetle. Splitting the wood? Yeah, I'm taking out the hardwood here now.

If you take that out, then it's easier for my neighbor to rive it. Of course, you'd never do this work on Sunday, would you? Of course not, sir. Well, every Sabbath up at Meeting House.

All day. Those Sabbath meetings featured scripture reading, prayers, a sermon from Elder William Brewster, and of course, singing. This hymn was actually sung by the Pilgrims, one of many from an early hymnal called the Ainsworth Psalter.

It was brought over on the Mayflower, and is on display today at Plymouth's Pilgrim Hall Museum. According to musicologists, the hymns were sung in unison, simple and straightforward, like the Pilgrims themselves. How do we know what we know about the Pilgrims? From the writings of those who were there.

And nobody wrote more than William Bradford. But just who was Bradford? William Bradford was one of America's greatest spiritual leaders ever. Elected governor 30 times.

It was only a five-year period throughout his adult life when he was not governor here. And that was because he begged them to try to find somebody else. He was so embarrassed about their constantly wanting him to be their governor.

I think many people are unaware that Bradford was an orphan. That he lost both his mother and his father by the time he turned five or six years of age. He was raised by his uncle and aunt.

And during that time, that's when he came in contact with a separatist church that was meeting in Babworth, England. By the time he was 12 years old, he had walked the eight miles to go to church there. When he heard the preaching of Richard Clifton, he was convicted and converted to the Christian faith.

Repented of his sins. Well, the attachment of Bradford to these separatists brought the scorn of all of his Anglican relatives down on his head. His uncles, his neighbors.

In fact, at the age of 14, he was disowned. And this is what he said when he was 14 years of age to his uncle, his aunts, all his relatives. When he was being forced to leave his own home and go live with Elder William Brewster.

At 14, he wrote, He was willing to suffer for the cause of Christ, even if it means his own relatives turn against him. Here's a young person, a teenager at 14 years of age, with conviction in his heart. So Bradford was a very serious and sober individual, not without humor.

Because the pilgrims were not individuals that just wore black, as the history books sometimes mistake them for. But rather an individual who really saw the providential hand of God and recognized that he was born for such a time as this. Time.

For the pilgrims, most of it was spent on the very basics of survival. A fact modern folks have a hard time grasping. Carolyn Travers explains why.

Well, we're so used to modern conveniences. If we want hot water, we go over to the sink and we turn the faucet. The amount of time people spent putting food on the table is really largely what they're doing with their time.

Whether it's going out and working the ground to plant the corn, to tend the corn, to harvest the corn. To grind the corn so you can cook the corn. In order to heat up the water, you first have to go out and get the wood.

And not only do you have to get the wood, you have to get enough wood to last you through the winter. When there's three feet of snow out there and it's minus seven degrees and you don't want to go out and get the wood. And if you did, it would be green and it wouldn't burn properly anyway.

We don't have that time sense. Which is why we modern pilgrims might be entirely unimpressed by a corn mill. But in 1636, when John Jenney built his grist mill, it had enormous implications.

For people who spent hours grinding just a quart or two of corn by hand. For nearly 370 years, it has operated on the Town Brook River, heard in the background. Leo Martin is the mill's operator.

Town Brook starts upstream at a pond called Billington Sea and it empties into the ocean right next to Plymouth Rock. Runs for a mile and a half and it drops 80 feet. So it's a perfect place to put a mill.

We have a constant flow of water here, even in a drought. Keep in mind, the pond and the river are all spring fed. So even when there's no water coming out of the sky, we never see any less water than we have now.

It's been running this hot for over 400 years. [Wording unclear in supplied transcript.] We expect it will keep going. The heart of the mill, of course, is the water wheel.

Noisy and powerful. Inside, the machinery of the corn mill takes up two floors. Downstairs, a 10-foot cog wheel is mounted vertically.

That's made of oak and hickory. The wheel itself is oak and the teeth are hickory. It is spinning a smaller gear called a lantern pinion.

And that lantern pinion is spinning the shaft that is spinning the stone upstairs. But they do weigh 2,500 pounds each. So we have two beams up here that are holding up 5,000 pounds of stone.

A short walk upstairs reveals the actual grinding stones. Okay, what we have here is we have a spinning stone that grinds the corn. That's held tight by a large wooden hoop.

Now, above the hoop and above the stone, we have a hopper that holds the corn. And the corn gets fed into the stones through the hopper. So if we lower the shoe, the corn will come out fast.

If we raise it, the corn will come out slower. To give you an example, I sell about 100 pounds of corn a week, ground corn a week. It takes me 20 minutes to grind it.

So to take 50 pounds and grind it would take about 10 minutes. Incredibly efficient machine. It's amazing how well they made this.

As far as the stone goes, I have two stones here. As I bring those stones together, if they ever touch each other, they will be destroyed. So I don't want to do that.

I do bring them to less than a sixteenth of an inch apart and start them. And that's where we grind. Now, there's only one way to tell if those stones are too close when we bring them together.

And that's where the expression, nose to the grindstone, came from. I don't know if you've ever heard that expression. But that is a Miller's expression.

I put my nose down between the stones and I smell the corn coming out. If I smell the corn burning, the stones are too close and I have to back off. So the whole time we're milling, we have to constantly smell the corn to make sure it's not burning.

And how did the pilgrims prepare their ground corn? The pilgrims would take it and make little pancakes out of it. We call those pancakes today Johnny Cakes. Back then they were called Journey Cakes.

And the reason they were called Journey Cakes is you could take the little pancake, put it in a pouch, and wherever you went, you could stop and eat it. It would give you instant energy and fill you up. But because the pilgrims had a weird accent, it sounded like Johnny Cake.

So today it still remains Johnny Cake, where it was really originally called a Journey Cake. Journey Cake, or Johnny Cake, neither was free. History records the pilgrims had significant economic challenges that most Americans know little about.

There's a financial side to this equation. You have to remember that the Mayflower was a rental ship. The pilgrims had to pay for the captain, the crew, the use of the ship.

They had to pay for enough supplies to keep all of them going for a year until they could get their crops in. They had to have enough supplies to last for even longer for some things. Nails, anything made of metal.

It took a long time before they could afford to set up forges and foundries here. This was a brand new venture. Nobody knew how it was going to work.

Nobody knew who was going to make money, who wasn't going to make money, or how it was going to come about. They were kind of making up the rules to fit the circumstances and doing the best they could. Doing the best they could meant the pilgrims renegotiated their loan at least once.

Ultimately, their note of 1620 was not fully paid off until 1648, two years shy of a 30-year mortgage. You're listening to Mark and Friends and the four segments of Remembering Pilgrims. I've broken into yesterday and today.

Yesterday, part one and two are archived at greatnewsradio.org. As well, at the completion of this broadcast, you'll be able to access three and four. So if you missed a portion, you can hear it at greatnewsradio.org under our Archived Programs link. Here's the concluding segment.

I hope you're enjoying it and being blessed by this colorful narration, the unique vignettes, engaging interviews, the music of the time, and the creative sound effects. Here's the concluding portion of Remembering Pilgrims. Hundreds of years ago, Mayflower passenger John Howland entered through this squeaky doorway.

It is the only house still standing in Plymouth where a Mayflower pilgrim actually lived. Curator Susan Shaw welcomes our crew and bids us close the door. We trail Susan up the stairs, mindful that we are literally following in the footsteps of a pilgrim.

Not just any pilgrim. Howland, you'll recall, was the man who fell off the Mayflower and lived to tell about it. Taking a seat, we learn a bit about the home and its famous family.

John Howland was a manservant in the Carver household. And Governor Carver wanted him to come over, so he paid his passage. Therefore, he would be listed as a servant because he didn't pay his own way.

He was one of two manservants and one of five servants in the household. It was a comfortable relationship, but not destined to last. Governor Carver went out in the fields and had a sunstroke and died.

And his wife died within a month. So John Howland became head of that little household. He was a bookkeeper and he was his assistant.

So he was theoretically assistant governor when Carver died. But he was an excellent businessman. As for the Howland home itself... It's a timber frame house, and they call it a six-posted, one-on-one timber frame.

Built like an English house, it faces the south so we get the light in the morning for our work. And there was only basically two rooms, the hall and the hall chamber, which we are in now. It's all open, exposed wood.

The floors here are original. They're called random width because they are all different widths, whatever width the tree happened to be that they cut down. And just how warm was such a house in a New England winter? Not very, I don't think, because there's no insulation in our walls whatsoever.

And the windows do leak. The conversation with Susan Shaw unearthed a practical look at pilgrim living in a thatched-roof house. We have two beds and a trundle bed.

Now, the reason we have the canopy bed... Well, in thatched roofs, little animals come up to eat, and then the cats come up for the animals, and sometimes they slip, and you wouldn't want them in your bed. Not just too many critters overhead, there were too many people in the bed. You've got five adults in the winter in these double beds, what we consider a double bed.

And they do prefer to sleep sitting up as much as possible because I think they must have had perpetual colds, and when you lay down, you've got a problem. Surprised at so much company, our producer was. Five people in this not even a queen-size bed, how did they do that? Tightly, and they were thinner than we are today.

And I see next to this bed with the canopy over it another bed, and this is like a bed frame, and it appears that there are ropes where we might have springs. Well, all of our beds would have had rope springs in this time period. And on top of the rope, you would have a straw mattress, and then on top of that, if you were lucky, you would have a down mattress.

And you have to be careful with rope springs, especially with the five people in bed, because as the humidity changes, so does the length of the rope. So you have rope wrenches that you tighten them up, and then would tie a knot on it, and then when it got tight again, you'd have to undo your knots. So that's where we get the expression sleep tight.

Are you coming to bed, John? It's late. Aye, and you see that pile of staves and hoops, Priscilla? I see it. By tomorrow evening, it must all be made into butter churns and tubs, and not to mention three barrels, Priscilla.

Burn in the candle then, John. Aye, love, aye. John and Priscilla Alden.

Theirs is the only other Mayflower Passenger's home still standing. Jim Baker is a descendant of Pilgrim John Alden and president of the Alden Society. The house that we are sitting in, you see, was built around 1660.

So the room we're in now, the great room, is the oldest part of the house. This room is where everything took place. This is the kitchen, this is the bedroom, this is everything.

As a home, it's pretty standard. The original piece, the room we're in now, is around 17 or 18 by 20. And that's pretty standard for one of the single-family homes.

In fact, we have this room and the room above it. And the interesting thing I think you can say about it is that it's still in the Alden family. It's the only piece of Pilgrim property, you know, divided originally in 1627 that's still owned by the original family, and actually had been lived in and was built by the Pilgrims.

Alden in particular is interesting because he came over here as a crewman. He was hired to come over to take care of the, he was a cooper, to take care of the barrels, take care of the cargo. But he chose to stay.

When he came, of course, he was probably not of their faith. But John, however he started in life, ended a very pious man. So much more could be said about John Alden, Miles Standish, John Carver.

Fascinating people, these Pilgrims. Yet despite the abundance of historical records and writings, their story is increasingly the object of historical revisionists. The Pilgrims had a strong understanding of what they were about.

You know, in total contrast to the economic view that they came over here for jobs, you know, to make money. Well, that's just laughable if you really understand who these people were. You know, they didn't come for those reasons at all.

Yes, one thing that is true about this is that there were a few people on board the Mayflower who were not Pilgrims, they were not Christians, they were not saints. The Pilgrims said they had both saints and strangers, as they put it in their quaint phraseology. So there were people who came to try to make their fortune in America.

But as far as the Pilgrims are concerned, that was a tiny, tiny number of people that kind of piggybacked on board their faith expedition because that's really what this was. A lot of people think they were just like us in funny clothes, about as far away as they can think back as their grandparents. And the worldview of the 17th century is so, so different.

They're interesting people to portray because of that, because they have put everything on the line to worship the way they believe they should. It would appear that a growing cultural hostility toward religion has served as a deterrent in the telling of the Pilgrim story. I think it's hard for people to understand if it's difficult to teach religion in school.

How do you discuss people who risked everything for their religion and leave it out? I mean, you really can't. Well, it's very much in tension the way people think today, and often it's because the Pilgrim story has been ignored. Paul Jehle.

We have not been teaching American history from its primary sources for many decades, and that takes its toll. Something will always fill a vacuum, and what has filled the vacuum is a politically correct or revisionist view of history that somehow says that even if the Pilgrims were Christians or the Pilgrims desired to express their Christian faith, then certainly they're insignificant or didn't make much of an impact on American history. But, of course, history records something vastly different.

And I would say that today's American populace in general, and our schoolchildren unfortunately in particular, are quite ignorant of the true history of both the Pilgrims and the Puritans and the establishment of the United States of America. There's one other Pilgrim story we haven't yet touched on, the most famous of them all, Thanksgiving. Peter Marshall sketches out the scene.

They planted 20 acres of corn under Squanto's tutelage. In October, when the corn was ripe, they wanted to have a Thanksgiving celebration. Some people say it was Squanto's idea, actually.

So they invited Massasoit, and he comes a day early with 90 braves and all the women and all the children, and the Pilgrim's women's hearts must have sunk because all the corn they're going to live on the following winter they're going to have to use to feed this mob of Indians. But they needn't have worried because Massasoit had thought of that ahead of time. He ordered his braves to hunt for the occasion, and they came with five dressed venison on poles and 12 wild turkeys, and the Pilgrim women supplied the vegetables.

The Indian women showed the Pilgrim women how to make berry pies. They had a three-day celebration of feasting, and they had bow and arrow shooting contests and foot races and relay races. White people and Indians together here at Plymouth, the first Thanksgiving in New England, it was a wonderful time.

You know, Thanksgiving for most of us is afternoon at grandma's kind of thing. This was three days, this first Thanksgiving, from which we Americans traditionally have derived the holiday of Thanksgiving. This is where it really started.

But what they started was much more than a holiday. And to the Pilgrims, we are indebted for much more than a feast. I think the single most important thing that the Pilgrims have to teach us is all-out commitment and surrender to Jesus Christ means the willingness to get out of your comfort zone, the willingness to step out and take risks.

I mean, they left family, they left friends, they left everything familiar behind them. And were willing to put everything on the line to obey the call of Jesus Christ on their lives. That's why they're so important for us to learn about because we need to imitate their commitment.

Suffice it to say, they were never large, but that small band of Pilgrims that never numbered very many here in the New World, that were overshadowed by Massachusetts Bay, that small band, because of the potency of their ideas and the clarity of their scriptural principles, influenced American culture more than any other group that came here. Thus, you do not have to be large, you do not have to be the majority. You merely have to be faithful.

No words, no tribute, no summary paints the legacy of the Pilgrims better than William Bradford. They may say with the Apostle they were in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of their own nation, among the heathen, in the wilderness, in the sea, in weariness and painfulness. What was it then that upheld them? It was God's visitation that preserved their spirits.

God, it seems, would have all men to behold and observe such mercies of His providence that they might be encouraged to depend upon God in their trials. God would have the world see and behold that He can do it without them. Thus, out of small beginnings, greater things have been produced by His hand that made all things of nothing and gives being to all things that are.

And as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto our whole nation. Let the glorious name of Jehovah have all the praise. Remembering Pilgrims is a special presentation of the Moody Broadcasting Network.

I'm Dan Wilmot. Well, I don't know about you, but I hope you enjoyed these Thanksgiving specials, because with all the hustle and bustle and racing around and trying to get things done and attended to, Thanksgiving blur, and so I thought I'd introduce these for your listening pleasure. I hope you are blessed by the message, the music, the history of the times, and you'll continue to have a thankful heart all year long.

Today and yesterday's programs are archived at greatnewsradio.org and wluj.org under the Mark & Friends tab. Now, tomorrow I'll begin introducing some Christmas music during Mark & Friends, so be sure to tune in. Thanks for listening.

Thanks for being a part of our radio listening family. This is Mark Burns with the Ministry of Great News Media. God bless you, and have a great day and night.