

The Pilgrims and Forty Bushels of Corn

“Divine Providence is God’s care and control of all things.” God used a group of people called the Pilgrims to help get our nation started. They wrote our first document of freedom called the Mayflower Compact. That is not the page in history we will tell here. There are many stories of their lives and faith. Here is one story of how God took care of them when they first landed in America at Cape Cod. This was before they made their settlement at Plymouth. This story is true.

Finding Corn

The Pilgrims were staying on the Mayflower while looking for a place to build a settlement. The women washed clothes along the beach. The men took a small boat to scout out the coastline to find a suitable place to settle. Let us see what the men found: “an old hut, an old black kettle, a pot hung over an old fire, mounds of dirt.” They dug into the mounds of dirt and found baskets of corn! Later at another place they found a basket of beans! They found a total of forty bushels of corn and some beans!

“Fruits of the Land”

Who put it there? The Indians! (Nauset Indians) God allowed the Pilgrims to find it just when they needed it! If they had landed a little way up or down the coast line they would not have found the corn. They “took with them part of the corn and buried up the rest. And so like the men from Eschol, carried with them of the fruits of the land and showed their brethren; of which, and their return, they were marvelously glad and their hearts encouraged... Also there was found more of their corn and of their beans of various colours; the corn and beans they brought away, purposing to give them full satisfaction when they should meet with any of them as, about some six months afterward they did, to their good content.” (The Pilgrims planned to pay the Indians back.) They saved the corn and beans to plant in the spring.

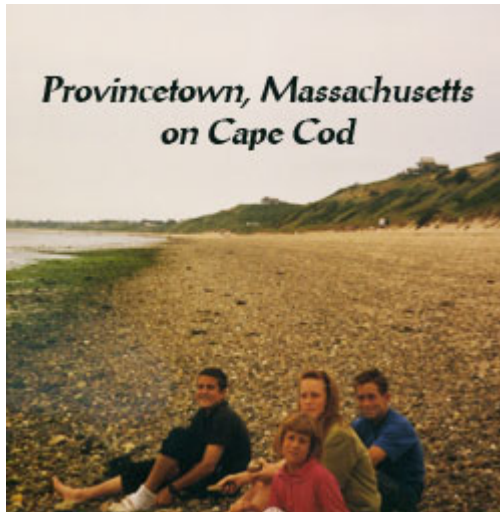
Acknowledging the “Special Providence of God”

Without this seed corn they would have starved in the spring! The seeds they brought from England may not have grown in America. “And here is to be noted a special providence of God, and a great mercy to this poor people, that here they got seed to plant them corn the next year, or else they might have starved, for they had none nor any likelihood to get any till the season had been past, as the sequel did manifest. Neither is it likely they had had this, if the first voyage had not been made, for the ground was now all covered with snow and hard frozen; but the Lord is never wanting unto His in their greatest needs; let His holy name have all the praise.” God had taken care of them! Finding the corn was a great encouragement to the Pilgrims.

“Indian Diplomacy” (Paying the Indians back)

In 1621 after their settlement in Plymouth, “one John Billington lost himself in the woods, and wandered up and down some five days, living on berries and what he could find. At length he light on an Indian plantation twenty miles south of this place, called Manomet; they conveyed him further off, to Nauset among those people that had before set upon the English when they were coasting whilst the ship lay at the Cape, as is before noted. But the Governor caused him to be inquired for among the Indians, and at length Massasoit (The Pilgrims had established a friendship with Massasoit by this time.) sent word where he was, and the Governor sent a shallop for him and had him delivered. Those people also came and made their peace; and they gave full satisfaction (The Pilgrims paid the Indians for the corn.) to those whose corn they had found and taken when they were at Cape Cod. Thus their peace and acquaintance was pretty well established with the natives about them...”

If you go to Provincetown, Massachusetts on Cape Cod today you will find a memorial marker. The place is called Corn Hill. That was the name the Pilgrims gave it. Here is the inscription on the marker:



1620 1920
Sixteen Pilgrims

Led by
Miles Standish, William Bradford, Stephen Hopkins and Edward Tilley
Found the precious Indian corn on this spot which they called **Corn Hill**, November 16th,
1620.

“And sure it was God’s good providence that we found this corn for else we know not how we should have done.”

Apply:

1. What character do we see demonstrated in the Pilgrims in this story? (forethought-planning ahead for their future, honesty-they paid the Indians back, faith in God to bring them to a new land, courage to come to America, love of freedom...)

2. How had God providentially used the bushels of corn in their lives? (It provided seed corn in the spring. They landed in just the right place to find it. The finding of the corn encouraged them that God was taking care of them...)

Let us be encouraged today by this page from our history. God is still in control, moving and working today as He sees fit.

Happy listening,
Peggy White (editorial staff)

Works cited:

1. *Mighty Works of God, Divine Providence* by Ruth Smith
2. *The Thanksgiving Story* by Alice Dalgliesh
3. *Of Plymouth Plantation* by William Bradford
4. *N.C. Wyeth's Pilgrims* text by Robert San Souci