

## The real story of thanksgiving

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXU8EXL7a\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXU8EXL7a_4)

Thy help cometh from the Lord who keepeth Israel  
The Lord of Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep  
We shall become thy shade upon thy right hand  
We shall protect thy incomings and outgoings

In the winter of 1620, the pilgrims at Plymouth are struggling to survive a long journey to America that has taken a heavy toll on the weary travelers.

They were not equipped to deal with the many challenges in the new world and nearly half perished in the early days of their journey.

In the midst of their struggle they humbled themselves and turned their hearts to God, praying for his mercy and Providence to protect them and establish their community.

Dear Lord, find us in the wilderness!

Their prayers would be answered through a series of divine and tragic events that occurred years earlier in the life of a young native boy named Tisquantum.

It was the early 1600s in the area that would soon be called Massachusetts.

Tisquantum and his tribe were curious about the white men from across the ocean who would visit their shoreline from time to time

When the ships arrived, Tisquantum and others went to investigate.

During one of those visits, an English sailor, Thomas Hunt, not satisfied with his income, and looking for dishonest gain, came to the region looking for opportunities.

Hunt broke trust with the tribes and took Tisquantum and 23 other natives aboard his ship.

The natives were forced into the ship's hull and taken across the ocean to Spain and sold into slavery.

His trust for the white man grew in Tisquantum's heart during his travel across the sea and he wondered why the Great Spirit would allow him to be so mistreated.

Tisquantum did not know what his future would hold and wondered if he would ever see home again.

Upon landing in Spain the slave traders sold several natives but Tisquantum was set free by a group of Spanish friars who disrupted the event before Tisquantum's sale.

The Friars took him in and he lived among them.

He learned how to speak Spanish and about their Christian faith, about the one true God of the Bible and his son Jesus.

They taught him their self-sustaining lifestyle, planting and harvesting crops.

Tisquantum grew to love and trust the monks and life was good with them but his desire to return home to his people, his tribe, never left him.

He longed for the familiar places the family and friends from whom he had been so violently taken.

He prayed to God that somehow, someday, he would be able to return to his tribe.

God heard his prayers and the friars devised a plan to get Tisquantum back to his homeland and his beloved tribe.

It would not be easy and it would take several years, but their plan was put into action he made his way to England where he lived with, and worked for, an English businessman named John Slaney.

Slaney and his Newfoundland company were looking for opportunities to expand trade with the New England natives. (Newfoundland sounds like new fin lin)

Tisquantum had learned how to speak English fluently and would earn his way back to America working for the company as a translator.

Hope sprung up into Tisquantum as he believed he would soon be home with his tribe, but he remained in England for a few more years.

Tisquantum's hope never died.

He'd been to places that few in his tribe could even imagine and he longed to tell them about all that he'd done and seen.

Finally, in 1619, everything was in place once more.

He sailed across the ocean.

This time his destination was home.

With his feet finally back on familiar soil, Tisquantum ran towards his village, excited to be reunited with his loved ones.

His heart was crushed by what he discovered.

Plague had ravaged his people only months earlier and everyone had died.

Of his tribe, only Tisquantum remained.

Confused and alone, he pondered his existence, his purpose.

Why had he endured the years of struggle and false hope and strange lands?

Why did he make it all the way home only to find such devastation?

Thoughts of death were not far from him.

He was accepted into the neighboring Wampanoag tribe but in his heart he knew he did not belong.

Word came to Tisquantum that a group of European settlers had set up their camp on the very site of his former village.

They were English pilgrims.

A religious devotee who journeys to a shrine or sacred place.

A person who travels, especially to foreign lands or to a place of great personal importance.

One of the English Separatists who founded the colony of Plymouth in New England in 1620.

He spoke their language and knew their ways.

He saw how they struggled to survive, how they prayed to Jesus for help, for hope.

His heart went out to them and he longed to help them.

With the blessing of the Wampanoag chief, Tisquantum made his presence known.

The pilgrims were filled with fear at the sight of him because so far relations with the native tribes had not been easy and tensions were high.

As Tisquantum neared the entrance of the village, he raised his voice and spoke in perfect English.

My name is Tisquantum, this is Big Bear, we mean you no harm.

The pilgrims were amazed at the sight and sound of him.

They welcomed him in and he made his home with them.

In the spring - Tisquantum taught the pilgrims what he had learned from his own tribe and his time with the Friars in Spain, how to plant crops and fertilize seeds.

He was their interpreter and helped make peace with the Wampanoag and other tribes in the area.

Before long he was more at home with the settlers than he was anywhere else.

He lived with them and in many ways became one of them.

In the fall of 1621, the harvest was abundant and the pilgrims were thriving.

God had answered their fervent prayers through Tisquantum and in the process, healed his broken heart.

In November of that year, the pilgrim leaders held a great feast, giving thanks to God for providing for their needs.

William Bradford, the leader of the pilgrims, asked Tisquantum to invite the Wampanoag tribe to the Thanksgiving celebration.

They came and joined the party for three days and there was peace and joy in the region.

Brothers and sisters, we gather today with thankfulness in our hearts.

The Lord in His mercy has planted us and established us here.

We have seen times of adversity and mourning and scarcity but now the Lord shows us a time of harvest and plenty and we are thankful for Squanto who has joined us in our pilgrimage here to worship God freely.

His path has not been easy, but the Lord was with him and sustained him and brought him to this place before us and he has been an answer to our prayers here, that the Lord would provide for us, provide a way by his mighty hand.

And the hand of God is with you and has never forsaken you.

The psalmist tells us, give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and His mercy endures forever.

And today, with our friends and our families and our neighbors we will declare this a great day of Thanksgiving and we will celebrate and we will praise the Lord for His mercy to us and his presence with us, amen.

Without Tisquantum's help the pilgrims may not have survived those early brutal years.

Tisquantum put his faith in the God of the Bible and lived with the pilgrims until his death.

He became known as Squanto and his legend lives on today in the story of the first Thanksgiving, the Native American man who God used to answer a desperate prayer from a desperate people.