

I am Thankful for God's Will(iam)

When I was five, my family took a homeschooler's history tour of the east coast. We saw the Liberty Bell, Gettysburg, John Adams's houses, Boston's Freedom Trail, and the Mayflower II, but the best part of the trip was visiting Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts. People rebuilt the village to make it look like it did in Pilgrim times. Actors dress up in homemade clothes, talk in old-fashioned ways, and do chores like work in their gardens, bake in clay ovens outside, make pottery, haul water with yokes, and care for animals like the Pilgrims had. The last thing we did was visit Governor William Bradford's grave on Burial Hill. It was amazing to be able to visit him even though he died in 1657. He would be someone I would love to meet.

I would tell him that people around the world are very interested in the Pilgrims and visit the town they once lived in to learn more. I would share how every year as a tradition we celebrate Thanksgiving with a day off of work (except the work of cooking!), and while we peel carrots and potatoes we listen to talk radio's Michael Medved tell stories about Mr. Bradford and other fellow Pilgrims, and I dress up as a little Pilgrim and make art projects, like cardboard and popsicle stick Mayflower ships and turkeys from paper towel tubes, and my mom reads lots of books to us about their lives while I do my latchhooking. I'd tell him that we set the table so each place has a tiny bowl with five kernels of corn in it, and while we are still hungry, we eat the corn to remind us how sometimes it was all each Pilgrim got to eat in a day. Also, my sisters and I make hardtack to acknowledge how the Pilgrims had to live on it while sailing, except theirs were so dried out, moldy, and buggy that they ate at night so they wouldn't have to see the bollweevils in them (ours is much better than real hardtack though!). This Thanksgiving we are going to make breadbowl pumpkin soup to acknowledge how some of the poorer Pilgrims did not have wooden trenchers to eat from so they used stale bread as plates, but they got so hungry

they ate them too! I think if he knew people did this to honor them, he would be amazed. If the Pilgrims could see us still celebrating today, even though the Pilgrim era was centuries ago, I think (and hope) that they would be as happy as can be.

I'm sure in his day he wondered if he was doing a good job as governor. I would love to tell him that even though it was very hard for him and the Pilgrims, now the whole world looks up to him and admires him and that maybe none of the Pilgrims would have survived in America without him. I'd remind him how all his people survived the horrible voyage to the new land, how he always tried to encourage the Pilgrims, such as telling them to be brave, and how he prayed that God would provide for them. God answered his prayers in an amazing way through Squanto who helped them so much.

I would tell him that he helped us be a Christian nation. Other people were coming to the new world too, like to Jamestown, but they wanted to explore and make money. The Pilgrims made a place to worship God in freedom and were very serious and faithful about it. It is a blessing we still have today. He also helped write the Mayflower Compact that made laws to keep order. I would remind him that it was the first time in history that people made their own government. It was the first step to making America. Some people might say Alexander Hamilton or Benjamin Franklin or our other founding fathers did all this, but Mr. Bradford started it.

William Bradford said, "We have noted these things so that you might see their worth and not negligently lose what your fathers have obtained with so much hardship." Mr. Bradford, we have not forgotten.