Nine Years

The story of Thanksgiving is one of struggle, learning, survival, and perseverance.

November 11, 2019 By Dan Zeller

November is time for Thanksgiving. It's a time when we come together and reflect, if even briefly, on the things that we're grateful for: family, friends, health, prosperity, and, for some, even the latest iEverything. (Sorry, Tim Cook, I don't do iAnything.)

It's a special day.

Nine years ago today, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. It was just weeks before Thanksgiving 2010 and, needless to say, I was more scared than thankful that year. There wasn't much to celebrate.

The story of Thanksgiving, though, is one of struggle, learning, survival, and perseverance.

The Pilgrims arrived in the New World from England in October 1620, far too late in the season to start any crops, and much farther north from their intended destination in what would later become Virginia. They lived aboard the Mayflower through the harsh New England winter, struggling against the elements and disease, with 45 of the 102 Pilgrims not surviving into spring. In March 1621, the Pilgrims moved ashore establishing their colony at Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Local Native American tribes made contact with the Pilgrims not long after they moved ashore, and they saw that they were in need of help. The Pilgrims learned survival tips from the indigenous peoples, including learning how to grow corn, how and where to fish in the local rivers, and what plants should be avoided. With their newly acquired skills and knowledge, the Pilgrims persevered through the summer of 1621 and reaped a fine harvest in autumn. They celebrated with their new friends in what has become popularly known as the first Thanksgiving.

Those of us diagnosed with cancer face similar challenges. We struggle mentally and physically; we learn as much as we can about the disease from experts in their fields; and we persevere through tests, poking, prodding, pill-popping, cutting, and zapping, all with the goal to survive.

As with the Pilgrims, not everyone facing cancer makes it. I'm remembering three of my prostate cancer blogging friends, Jim M., Tim, and Jim, who all passed away this year. Even though we never met in person, I'm more than grateful for their insights, support, and wit. They are missed.

Of course, the fact that I'm still here blogging about my prostate cancer experience nine years

after my diagnosis is not lost on me, either. I'm extraordinarily thankful for that fact, and for the members of the medical team who made that possible.

Thanks, too, to family and friends who have been there for me in ways big and small throughout this adventure. A burden shared is a burden halved, and you have made it easier for me.

Lastly, I'm more than humbled by the fact that more than 22,000 people from around the globe have read bits and pieces of my story over the last nine years. It just boggles my mind. Thank you for taking an interest—even if you accidentally stumbled across my website on your iSomething—and for sharing your thoughts, comments, and support.

Whether you're in the U.S. or elsewhere in the world, I wish you a Happy Thanksgiving!

With gratitude,

—Dan

This post originally appeared on Dan's Journey through Prostate Cancer. It is republished with permission.

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