

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST THANKSGIVING SERVICE

Sunday 3rd February, marks the anniversary of Australia's first Christian church service. Rev. Richard Johnson conducted the service under a large tree in Sydney Cove. The congregation was a mixture of troops and convicts.

Richard and his wife Mary, who was expecting their first child, had left home, family and all the comforts of English civilization. The eight and a half month voyage was a tough one, with wild seas and strong winds. Mary became so sick it was feared she would die. Her unborn child did.

Now, after a week in this strange new land, surrounded by strange plants and animals, oppressive heat, curious natives, reluctant convicts and soldiers, and with the anticipation of unloading the eleven ships and building a settlement out of nothing, Johnson gets up to preach.

What does he chose for his theme? Psalm 116:12 - "***How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me?***" (NIV). Without pulpit or church, but full of questions about the future, he offered thanksgiving to God for their safe delivery from the tempestuous seas.

At the conclusion of the service, they all knelt and dedicated the new colony to God in prayer.

Richard Johnson was a strong man of faith and a brave pioneer. Pioneers lead the way for others to follow. Today, we can follow in his footsteps by giving thanks to God for so many things starting with the solid Christian foundation Australia has. A foundation laid by so many strong men and women of faith like Richard and Mary Johnson. We can also give thanks for the freedom we have to read the Bible and meet together for church services, for the prosperity we have as a nation, and for our homes and families.

What else can you thank God for today?