

LAND HO!



And so on October 11, 1492, around 10 PM, Columbus thinks he sees a candle bobbing in the distance. He points it out to another seaman who agrees but a third seaman says he sees nothing. The ships continue west. In the morning a sailor calls out Tierra! Tierra! But Columbus says he'd seen land earlier and claims the reward.

In the daylight they circled the island now named San Salvador by Columbus. The leaders went ashore in the morning, Columbus, dressed in heavy armor. He claimed the island for the King and Queen. The other seamen fell to their knees begging mercy from the Admiral for having doubted his belief in sailing west to come to the east.

The natives, naked as the day they were born, watched this seemingly magical ceremony not knowing that their land and homes and their very bodies had just been transferred to these strange beings. "...who wore thick garments some as thick as animals' skins, others thicker by far and as rigid as the back of the biggest turtle: "One of the islanders was offered a stick which was pulled from within another stick hanging at the left side of the strangers...he held it tightly for an instant but at once let go his hand was bleeding with a deep nasty cut."

The natives by Columbus's account were: gentle and peaceful people and of great simplicity. They willingly trade all they had for trinkets of little value to the Europeans. They especially loved the colored beads and the tiny bells.

Columbus reported back to their Majesties...he would bring them from his next voyage "as much gold as they need...and as many slaves as they ask."

Columbus's greatness is in his expert skill and knowledge as a navigator. He was an adventurer and was willing to take great risks to gain fame and fortune. He was very religious often giving credit to his god for his accomplishments. In modern days he is being evaluated by a different standard, one which looks with severe judgments on what became of the "gentle and peaceful people" he first encountered on the beach that historic day.

By Richard L. Pastega