“KEEP CASTING YOUR BREAD UPON THE WATER”

Scripture Text: Ecclesiastes 11:1

P R A Y E R

Introduction

The Mississippi..........The Ohio.........The Rio Grande’...............and the Amazon. These are just a few of the many great rivers in the world.

But out of all the great rivers in the world, none is as great as Egypt’s NILE RIVER.

The Nile is the world’s LARGEST RIVER, traveling 4,145 miles over three countries, covering a land mass of close to 1.3 million sq. miles.

Unlike most rivers which run NORTH to SOUTH............the NILE runs SOUTH to NORTH.

Each year during the RAINY SEASON, the Nile overflows its banks, covering hundreds of miles of farmland in floodwaters.

In BIBLICAL TIMES farmers would get in boats and go out on the floodwaters to CAST THEIR SEEDS.

Normally this might seem like a rather strange and foolish practice, but the farmers had learned a valuable secret, and that was ........The seeds would sit on top of the water until the flood waters receded. Then the seeds would be covered with a RICH LAYER OF SILT. Soon those seeds would sprout up, and eventually the FARMER would reap a RICH HARVEST.

Perhaps Solomon thought about this AGRICULTURAL secret as he penned this FIRST VERSE of Ecclesiastes 11.
“Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.”

This evening, let’s spend some reflecting on a valuable spiritual lesson Solomon is teaching us in this verse.

First of all, let’s consider............

I. THE COMMAND: Cast Your Bread Upon The Water

1. A Skeptic would say........”Only a fool would cast his bread/seeds on WATER..........why not cast it on the SOIL where you know you will get a RETURN?”

2. We have to remember, GOD’S WAYS ARE NOT OUR WAYS and that GOD’S WAYS are WISER than our ways.

   God is COMMANDING you and me to “Cast Our Bread ..........Cast Our Seeds where it appears there is NO HOPE of any kind of return.”

3. Now.......How Do You And I “Cast our bread upon the water?”
   Let me suggest to you FOUR WAYS:

   (A) Keep Casting Your Bread of Good Deeds

   GALATIANS 6: 10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us DO GOOD to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

   A classic example of this is the Old Testament account of ELIJAH and the WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH.

   In the town of Zarapheth, there lived this widow woman who had ONE SON she loved dearly. One day she went out to gather some firewood. She had just enough meal and oil to prepare one final meal.

   About that time God sent THE PROPHET ELIJAH to her house. He was weary from travel and hungry. The last thing the widow woman needed was another mouth to feed. After explaining her FOOD situation, Elijah asked the widow to bake him a little meal cake first, then one
for herself and her son.

Now why should she give a portion of the last food she had to this stranger who showed up on her doorstep, when in all likelihood she wouldn’t get anything in return?

Well she did as ELIJAH had asked and her good deed paid off!!! From that day on, God blessed the widow and her son with plenty to eat.

But that wasn’t the end of the story........One day the widow’s son became very sick, and eventually died. ELIJAH brought the dead boy back to life and gave him to his mother.

This Widow had “Cast the Bread of A Good Deed” and the blessings came back to her in many ways.

My friend, I challenge you this evening to KEEP CASTING YOUR BREAD OF GOOD DEEDS...........and don’t worry about what you will get in return........and don’t concern yourself with who gets the credit, honor and glory, so long as God is glorified by your your good deeds.

(B) Keep Casting Your Bread of Kind Words

PROVERBS 12: 25 says, “An anxious heart weighs a man down, BUT A KIND WORD CHEERS HIM UP.”

PROVERBS 18:21 “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

When we GOSSIP about people........when we CRITICAL of people.............when we are POINTING OUT THE FAULTS of people, when we TEAR PEOPLE DOWN....we are literally speaking “death” upon those individuals.

But when we SPEAK encouraging words, kind words, tender words, words of comfort, words of cheer,
words of praise, words of love.........We are literally
speaking “life” upon them.......Our kind words are like a
BREATH OF LIFE-GIVING OXYGEN to those who receive
them.

ILLUSTRATION: It was a DARK and DREARY day in Boston,
when Philip Brooks, the great hymn writer, walked into
the local newspaper office. In the next day’s paper, a
reporter wrote: “It was dark and dreary in Boston
yesterday, but PHILIP BROOKS walked through our office
and the sun began to shine.”

My friend, YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN, and as a CHRISTIAN
you can SPEAK WORDS that will totally change the
CLIMATE in your HOME...........in your WORKPLACE........
and anywhere you GO!

I challenge you this evening to KEEP CASTING YOUR BREAD OF
KIND WORDS everywhere you go..........You never
know whose life will be changed by the KIND WORDS
YOU SAY!

(C) Cast Your Bread of Persistent Prayer

LUKE 18: 1 “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to
show them that they should always pray and not give up.
He said:

ILLUSTRATION: For many years a Gold Prospector in California
dug day after day in hopes of “striking it rich.” With little
to show for his efforts, the man gave up, and died a poor
man.

Ironically, years later, the LARGEST GOLD NUGGET that
has ever been UN-EARTHED was found just THREE FEET
from where the OLD PROSPECTOR had stopped digging.
How many of us have prayed and prayed for something and after awhile we just gave up, thinking God wasn’t going to answer our prayers?

How many times have we GIVEN UP when perhaps if we had prayed just ONE MORE TIME, ONE MORE DAY, we would have received what we had been praying for?

KEEP CASTING YOUR BREAD OF PERSISTENT PRAYER

-If you are praying for a LOST LOVED ONE.......Keep Casting Your Bread.

-If you are praying about YOUR TROUBLED MARRIAGE.........Keep Casting Your Bread.

-If you are praying about A NEW JOB OPPORTUNITY ............Keep Casting Your Bread.

-If you are praying about ONE OF YOUR CHILDREN .........Keep Casting Your Bread.

-If you are praying for someone who is BATTLING A TERMINAL ILLNESS.........Keep Casting Your Bread!

KEEP CASTING THE BREAD OF PERSISTENT PRAYER!

(D) Cast Your Bread of Godly Influence

I Peter 3:1,2 “Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.”

Illustration: When I was ministering at Wilkinson Church
of Christ, I saw the promise of these verses fulfilled in the lives of five ladies in the Church. For many years these five wives sat alone in Church, while their husbands stayed home. Oh, they might show up for a Christmas program or some special dinner we were having at the Church, but other than that they never darkened the doors.

While all five invited their husbands to come to Church with them, they never nagged them about it. Instead they set an example in their own lives by being faithful to the LORD. Over the course of time all five husbands were in Church seated beside their wives every Lord’s day.

My friend, don’t ever underestimate the power of your godly influence on the lives of others. When your life is over you may not leave this world with much money or a lot of nice material possessions. But if the life of just one person was eternally changed by your godly influence, your life will have not been lived in vain.

KEEP CASTING THE BREAD OF YOUR GODLY INFLUENCE!

Well now that we have considered the COMMAND, let’s consider……..

II. THE COMPENSATION: After Many Days It Will Come Back To You

1. Those words “AFTER MANY DAYS” are not words we particularly like to hear.

   In our American society we have grown accustomed to getting what we want, when we want it. We have INSTANT coffee…..INSTANT pudding…..INSTANT mashed potatoes…..and INSTANT soup.

2. Because we live in a SOCIETY that feeds off of instant gratification it is very difficult condition our minds and hearts to patiently wait for something. How easily and quickly we give up on things we have to wait for.
3. **GOD is promising us,** If we will PATIENTLY KEEP CASTING OUR BREAD UPON THE WATER...........He will eventually bring BOUNTIFUL REWARDS BACK TO US in ways we never dreamed.

4. **There are TWO valuable lessons we need to learn about how GOD COMPENSATES us:**

   **(A) God Compensates Us In His Own Way**

   LUKE 6: 38 says, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

   ILLUSTRATION: As her lifelong ministry, ANNIE SULLIVAN took care of a DEAF/MUTE/BLIND GIRL named Helen Keller.

   For years, ANNIE SULLIVAN endured terrible frustration and disappointment as she tried to educate this TRIPLY HANDICAPPED young girl.

   The part of that endearing story many people don’t remember is that in the twilight years of her life, ANNIE SULLIVAN herself went blind. And guess who took care of her until she died? HELEN KELLER!

   Annie Sullivan “Cast Her Bread Upon the Water”
   And “After many days God brought it back to her.”

   GOD never forgets anything we do for HIS HONOR and GLORY. He always COMPENSATES US IN HIS OWN WAY.

   **(B) God Also Compensates Us in His Own Time**

   GALATIANS 6: 9 says, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the PROPER TIME we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

   One question I have been asked many times over the years is “Don’t you get real frustrated when you’ve
preached your heart out and no one comes forward to make a decision?"

At one time that used to really bother me, but not so much any more. You know why? I hold on to GOD'S PROMISE in ISAIAH 55:11, which says:

“My Word will not return to me EMPTY“ (void)

I know in HIS TIME, God will honor the preaching of His Word..........that is why I can get in the pulpit week after week and just “Keep Casting the Bread” “Keep Sowing the Seeds”........because I know in HIS TIME, God will bring about a harvest.

That is TRUE in your life as well. You may not see THE FRUIT of your labors for weeks or months or even years........BUT IN HIS TIME, GOD WILL COMPENSATE YOU FOR ALL THE BREAD YOU HAVE CAST UPON THE WATER.............For His Honor and Glory.

CONCLUSION

The Great Evangelist, CHARLES SPURGEON once said,

“A good character is the best TOMBSTONE. those whose lives were changed by you, and helped by you will remember you when all the “Forget-Me-Nots” have withered. Carve your name on HEARTS........and not on marble.”

LONELY WIDOW, Keep Casting Your Bread Upon the Water!

DISCOURAGED HUSBAND, DISCOURAGED WIFE........Keep Casting Your Bread Upon the Water!

FRUSTRATED PARENT, Keep Casting Your Bread Upon the Water!

INSECURE TEENAGER..........Keep Casting Your Bread Upon the Water!

Right now........all your GOOD DEEDS........all your KIND WORDS ........all your PERSISTENT PRAYERS........all your CHRISTIAN
INFLUENCE may appear to be in VAIN.

But GOD has promised us that if we will “Keep casting our bread upon the water, in many days He will cause it come back to us in the form of great blessings we never thought possible.”