

Faith Casting – Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

I. Introduction:

- A. I briefly shared this scripture with the men last Saturday morning, but I didn't develop it very far.
 - 1. It hadn't developed in my heart very far.
 - 2. But the Spirit has kept it on my mind, and now I hope there might be a blessing in it for all of us.

- B. For those of you who read your Bibles in paragraph form, you'll notice that these six verses are a unit.
 - 1. Every commentator I've checked have kept these verses together, adding that they are talking about charity or benevolence – sharing with others the blessings which the Lord has given to us. I agree..
 - 2. But at the same time, these six verses seem to be proverbial – like much of Solomon's writing.
 - 3. Each verse could stand on its own, and the details of each verse don't completely synchronize the others
 - 4. What do falling trees have to do with falling rain or the development of an unborn baby?
 - 5. What relationship does the weather report have to do with casting your seed grain on standing water?

- C. Reading and rereading this paragraph I could easily see someone bringing a lesson on evangelism.
 - 1. If we look at the bread of **verse 1** as the *"bread of life,"*
 - a. and if we think of the water as the mass of humanity,
 - b. we might make the same application that the Lord Jesus did in His parable of *"the sower and the soils."*
 - 2. And in **verse 7** we could talk about the Lord's sovereign control over His evangelistic work.
 - a. *"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand:*
 - b. *for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."*
 - 3. Nearly every verse here could be applied to the ministry of the gospel.

- D. But this evening I'd like to make a related application.
 - 1. What if we look at this bread as **faith** rather than as the **gospel**?
 - 2. What lessons might we learn about casting our faith upon the Lord?

- E. I spent half an hour trying to devise an outline through which to look at *"Faith-Casting."*
 - 1. I came up with four points: *"who," "what," "where" and "why?"*
 - 2. What is faith casting? Why should we do it and when?
 - 3. My fourth point would have been *"wherewith"* or **how** should we faith cast?
 - 4. But as I just suggested, these verses are more like a jigsaw puzzle than a sculpture.
 - 5. So let's simply think about each verse individually.

II. *"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."*

- A. Maybe Solomon was thinking about Egypt, where this practice was common.
 - 1. But perhaps it was done in the Jordan valley as well.
 - 2. In those places were rivers which flooded every year.
 - a. As the waters began to recede, the farmers would fling their seed grain out onto the muddy water.
 - b. There it would sink into the silt and later germinate.
 - 3. Don't picture those farmers or their wives, throwing out the Wonder Bread or slices of sour dough onto a lake, the way that kids feed the ducks.
 - a. This was *"bread"* in the sense of food; it was a future crop.
 - b. This was seed which could have been milled or ground into flour, but is being used for a new crop.
 - 4. And as such it was not just hopes and wishes that were being scattered. It was real stuff.
 - 5. Solomon is telling us is to sacrifice our current blessing for the sake of others or future blessings.
 - 6. It might appear to be a waste, but it is not. The results might surprise the uninitiated.
 - 7. However, it may take many days before the returns start coming in.

- B. One the basic tenants of farming is faith.
1. It is not like our little raised vegetable gardens that we can pamper with hand watering, fertilizing, and meticulous weeding.
 2. Particularly the organic farmer; he plants his seed and then trusts the Lord to do the rest.
 3. He farms by faith. He casts his bread upon the waters.
- C. And the Christian should *“farm spiritually”* in the same basic manner.
1. Whether we are talking about missions or the evangelism of our local church, every week and every day, we need to cast our faith out there for the Lord to bless.
 - a. If we have a distant friend with liver or kidney failure, about all we can do is cast out our faith.
 - b. If we are praying for a missionary who is beginning a new work half way across the country or half way around the world, the only thing we can do is cast out our faith.
 2. *“Thou shalt find it after many days.”*
 3. It may not produce the crop that we really want, but Biblical faith is willing to let the Lord be God.
- D. By the way, this bread is to be cast upon *“the waters.”*
1. I said last week that we have a right to apply the word *“waters”* to people scattered around the world.
 2. The angel who was speaking to John in **Revelation 17:15** said, *“The waters which thou sawest... are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”*
 3. You and I may not be able to personally go to India or China to share the gospel, but the Lord isn't limited.
 4. That bread, floating on the water, may by the grace of God sail all the way to Peru or the Philippines.
 5. You could think of your prayers, your faith or even you money as bread cast upon the waters.

III. *“Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.”*

- A. Several times, in different circumstances, the Bible speaks of *“seven and then of eight.”*
1. And most of the time the Lord is speaking about being thorough or complete; don't quit with one or two.
 2. Peter asked, *“How many times, Lord?”* How about 70 times 7? Never give up.
 3. Like the little portion of oil and meal at the bottom of the barrel, you'll never run out, if you keep giving your faith to the Lord.
- B. *“For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.”*
1. None of us know what problems came up today in the life of Missionary Mike Meredith or Scott Silvers.
 2. There is a lot of evil in this world, and then there are problems which aren't sinful in themselves.
 - a. Grace Indian Baptist Church in Talahina, Oklahoma is in the midst of their Vacation Bible School.
 - b. What if tomorrow afternoon a tornado swept through that little community?
 - c. Those people need our prayers and our faith, whether or not we understand that need.
 - d. Not only do people need to be protected from *“natural disasters,”* but many need salvation as well.
 3. And did the Fultons think, a month ago, that they would be in the septic mess they are in now?
 4. This is a needy world. *“For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.”*
 5. So, *“Cast thy bread upon those waters.”*
- C. And this means we need to learn to spread our faith far and wide.
1. People need the Lord's blessings on ministries which may only be in remote corners of our understanding, like the Philippines.
 2. I know that we all have our prayer lists and our special friends and burdens for which we pray regularly, but we need to cast our faith beyond them. *“Give a portion to seven, and also to eight.”*
 3. I'm not suggesting that the Lord's will is going to fail if we aren't engaging our faith on other's behalf, but still we have the exhortation to be engaged.
 4. *“For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.”*

IV. “If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.”

- A. There are several kinds of clouds, but nimbus clouds are the real rain makers.
1. Cumulonimbus (kyoo-myuh-low-nimbuhs) clouds are usually known as “*thunder-heads*,” and they can produce devastating weather – usually local, but intense.
 2. Nimbostratus formations are another kind of rain-maker.
 3. While still often heavy, they are usually the soaking kind.
 4. Nimbus clouds are full of rain, and in the right conditions they empty themselves upon the earth.
 5. When the clouds are full of rain, they rain.
- B. They should remind us of the Lord in the sense that He delights in blessing, when the circumstances are right.
1. We may have our little watering cans, sprinkling a little moisture on our potted plants.
 2. But the Lord... the Lord has enough to soak every field and every garden in sight.
 3. Cast thy faith upon the Lord, who has the means of meeting the needs our little watering cans can't touch.
 4. The ministry of Frank Tottingham in Southern Australia needs God's showers of blessing and so does Raul Enyedi in Romania.
- C. And remember something else: when that 60 foot pine falls, once it settles to the ground, it is not of itself going anywhere. It is down.
1. The arborist has to know what he is doing to bring that tree down into the small empty spot between the house and the fence.
 2. We may think we know where it would be best for God's blessings to fall, but do we really know for sure?
 3. *“Lord, you know what is needed. I'll leave you to the decision: north or south.”*

V. “He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.”

- A. Faith-casting must not be based upon our knowledge of the weather.
1. How many times have we prayed for something and then added: *“But not just yet, Lord?”*
 2. How many times have we seen an opportunity to witness of our faith in Christ, but then we looked at the circumstances – the way the wind was blowing – and we failed to speak?
 3. *“The fear of man bringeth a snare.”*
 4. And the **ignorance** of man is a swampy mess into which most of us don't really want to enter. But we must
 5. Then turning Solomon's thought around, how many times have we neglected our devotions – our time for faith-casting – because there was just so much which had to be done, and the weather was perfect?
 6. The weather was too good to spend time in prayer and worship.
- B. Remember Paul's description of faith: it is *“the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen.”*
1. The ability to trust the Lord is not a commodity which will run out if we don't husband it very well.
 2. The more we trust, utilizing our faith, the more faith we'll find that we have.
 3. It is like love; it is inexhaustible.
 4. And if we are casting our bread upon the water, we shall find it after many days, no matter which way the wind is blowing.

VI. “As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.”

- A. Faith-casting requires faith. I know that sounds like a silly statement, but, spiritually, it is quite logical.
1. *“Thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all things,”* and you probably never will.
 2. *“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are the Lord's ways higher than your ways, and His thoughts than your thoughts” – Isaiah 55:9.*
 3. Therefore we need to learn to bring our requests to Him, and then to step back and watch Him work.
 4. That is, watch if the Lord permits us to see.
 5. Because it is difficult to watch the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child.

- B. It may take eight or nine months; it may take ten months, before your faith produces its God-intended results.
 1. Rarely does the Lord give us instantaneous and miraculous results for our faith-casting.
 2. Very often there are steps and growth required, and we may only be able to guess at what God is doing.
 3. And even then, expecting great things, we don't know if the result of our faith will be a boy or a girl.

VII. *"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."*

- A. When is the best time to cast faith upon the Lord? That's a silly question.
 1. When is the best time for our devotions and prayer time: morning or evening? That's just as silly.
 2. What if you have your family devotions after lunch the way Judy and I do? The time makes no difference.
 3. When should we cast our faith upon the water? Constantly, morning, noon and night.
 4. *"But this I say (says Paul), He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" – II Corinthians 9:6.*
 5. I know that **Galatians 6:7** is usually expressed in as a negative, but it has a positive side to it.
 6. *"Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."*

- B. In my study, I noticed that some commentators suggest that this verse is talking about early in the Christian life in contrast to the faith-casting of the extremely mature saint.
 1. But are the prayers, or the evangelism, or the faith-casting of the elderly saint more or less effective than that of the young, exuberant child of God?
 2. Of course not, because ultimately we are talking about God's blessings and not really about our faith.
 3. What time of day is best for casting the seed on the water: sun up or sun down?
 4. Unless you are thinking about what the birds might do, one time of day is not better than another.
 5. And who will be more blessed in casting this seed on the water: the young woman or the old man?
 6. It doesn't make any difference.

- C. The important thing for all of us – the most important thing for any of us – is the actual bread-casting.
 1. *"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou **SHALT** find it after many days."*
 2. The point is, if we aren't casting our bread and our faith upon the waters, we are not going to find it later.
 3. Solomon is giving us an exhortation here: do it.

- D. Peter and some of the brethren had been out all night trying to catch a few fish for their families.
 1. *"Then Jesus (called to them from the shore), Children, have ye any meat (bread)?*
 - a. *They answered him, No.*
 - b. *And he said unto them, cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.*
 - c. *They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."*
 2. If we are not willing to cast our faith out in the direction to which the Lord is pointing, there will be no fish.
 3. And if we don't cast at all, there certainly will be no fish.
 4. We should not want only a **few** spiritual fish. It should be our desire for multitudes and multitudes.
 5. May our nets and our ship be filled to overflowing.
 6. May our church be at the point of capsizing with all the harvest the Lord provides.