**Cast Your Bread On the Waters**

Ecc. 11:1-5

Introduction:

1. We live in a society that is economically blessed. We enjoy the many privileges associated with these blessings and we should be thankful. I think we are.

2. But not everyone is so blessed.

3. Many in the ancient world lived day to day. We may see evidence of this in Jesus’ prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11).

4. For many of us such immediacy has never been experienced. We have much to eat and little worry about what we will eat for many days.

5. So the call of this passage to “cast our bread on the surface of the waters” may not strike us in the same way as those whose food is in limited supply. One in a German concentration camp might see this passage in a different light than you and I.

6. What does the text mean? And, how are we to apply it?

Discussion:

I. This passage recognizes the uncertainties of life.

 A. “You do not know what misfortune may occur.”

 B. Sometimes the clouds are full and the rain abundant. Sometimes not.

 C. If a tree falls it may fall toward the north or the south we must deal with it where it falls.

 D. You may wait to sow watching wind and rain, but these are uncertain. There is a sense

 in which you must act even though there is risk associated with your action.

 1. Thus the instruction of verse 6.

 2. But be reminded of the darkness and futility.

 3. But rejoice instead of being depressed. Act instead of being overcome with the

 darkness and futility (9-10).

 4. This may pretty much define our happiness level.

 E. Misfortune occurs. Hesitation inhibits. Idleness is not productive. Light is good, but

 there are days of darkness. Rejoice. Take control. Act.

 F. You have seen many people in life who have allowed uncertainty to inhibit their actions.

 1. The student who says, “I can’t do this,” never learns his multiplication table.

 2. Another says, “I am not good at this,” and quits even though she could develop her

 skill.

 3. We all are affected in some way by uncertainty. And so we try to find security. We

 collect food for many days (cf. Lk. 12:16-21). Jesus said, “Do not be afraid” (Lk.

 12:22-34). Perhaps fear inhibited the rich man from sharing with Lazarus (Lk.

 16:19ff).

II. This passage calls on us to share anyway.

 A. Casting your bread on the waters is obviously a figurative expression.

 B. It is defined in verse 2. “Divide your portion to seven or even to eight.”

 C. Sharing is commended everywhere in Scripture.

 1. Isaiah speaks of people fasting as they appeal to God. They call to God, but God

 says, “Divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your

 house; when you see the naked, cover him; and do not hide yourself from your

 own flesh” (58:7).

 2. We are to contribute to the needs of the saints (Rom. 12:13).

 3. “Do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased”

 (Heb. 13:16).

 4. We know all this, but the uncertainties of life cause us to fear. And we are all

 aware that there are people who steal, defraud and take advantage and it is

 inappropriate to encourage such behavior by just giving indiscriminately.

 Sometimes we buy them off just so we escape their insistence.

 D. But something concerns me about the recommended amount of sharing. “Divide

 your portion to seven or even eight.” That means split it 8 or 9 ways, because you

 have to count yourself.

 1. If you have 100 oranges and divide them between 8 people that means you are

 left with 12.5. If you split it 9 ways you are left with 11.1.

 2. 100 percent of your portion (whatever that is split 8 or 9 ways) reduces you to 11-

 12%.

 3. That’s a significant sacrifice. You can loose weight on that.

 4. Take your yearly income and divide by 8 or 9. Now live on that.

III. Ultimately “casting your bread” produces good results.

 A. “Cast your bread on the waters, **for you will find it after many days.”**

 B. Some might say, “Yes, you may find it after many days. Wet, soggy and ruined.” But

 the context here is more positive. The preferred understanding would be that you will

 be rewarded by having cast your bread on the waters.

 C. If we interpret this of our food, it would mean that if you divide your food you have the

 promise of more food later. If you interpret it figuratively of whatever blessing you

 have it would mean that whatever blessing you share it will become a blessing to you.

 D. A passage that comes to mind here is that of Luke 16:1ff and the parable of a manager

 who acted shrewdly.

 1. He was gracious to people.

 2. They would treat him kindly when he was in trouble.

 E. Our goals in “casting our bread” should be more noble than his.

 1. We should not cast our bread just so we can be rewarded later. We ought to be

 motivated by our care for others.

 2. But there are blessings promised for making sacrifices.

 a. Moses gave up Egypt counting the reproach of Christ greater riches (Heb.

 11:24-26).

 b. Giving repaid in the resurrection (Lk. 14:12-14).

 c. A hundred times as much and eternal life (Mk. 10:28-30).

 F. God will increase the harvest of righteousness. Needs will be supplied and ultimately

 God glorified (2 Cor. 9:10-13).

Conclusion:

1. Casting our bread upon the waters ultimately produces good results.

2. Even with the consideration of uncertainties we are asked to divide our portion to with seven or eight. That requires courage and faith in God to supply our needs.

3. But in all of this we need to **take action** so that we can rejoice rather than be overwhelmed with grief, anger and pain.