

## **SERMON: FLOOD FARMING**

### **Ecclesiastes 11:1**

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

#### **Introduction**

This text issues a command that lends itself to debate. The command is simple enough, but the poetic image is difficult to define. Some commentators think the verse refers to philanthropy: the preacher is encouraging us to be generous to the poor. The point is that if you are generous to others when they are in need, eventually you will receive help in your time of trouble.

Some commentators think it refers to business practices. It encourages you to invest in foreign overseas trade and in due time your ship will come in and you will make a huge profit. Others add more to this theme and say it implies diversifying your investments. The English equivalent is, "Don't put all of your eggs in one basket."

This may sound funny or even offensive, but some think the metaphor refers to a brewing practices. Bread was thrown into the water during the process of mixing ingredients to make beer. The bread is not lost or wasted but will come back to you in the form of delicious beer. (Let me make this clear: I am not advocating drinking alcoholic beverages.)

All of the interpretations of this metaphor imply that a certain meritorious, counterintuitive act will pay off in the future. This fact should never be forgotten. It says, "Don't be afraid to do good even if the reward may seem late coming.

One of the fundamental of Biblical hermeneutics is to discover the "first use" of a term or figure of speech and then proceed from there. The first use of the phrase, "Cast your bread on the water," goes back to ancient Egypt.

It is common knowledge that the ancient Egyptians were the technological innovators of their time. They built the pyramids, were some of the first to speculate that the earth was spherical, performed caesarean births, embalmed corpses that would remain in tack for centuries, and were the first to devise what we now call the longitude-latitude system of navigation and mapping. This is just to name a few.

Of course, we also know that at one time in their history, they were brutal in their treatment of the Jews. We know about mean old Pharaoh and the ten plagues.

The Nile River flooded each year. The flood waters inundated farm land miles from the river bed. The Egyptians built their calendar around the flooding. They could not plant

their crops until the water receded. Sometimes this took weeks, even months. This cut the growing season for grain very short. On one hand there was the flooding and then there was the hot dry summer. As you would readily conclude, the flooding was initially a nuisance and an impediment until they figured out a way to turn it into an advantage.

As a solution, on the farm land that was annually flooded, they began to sow wheat and barley seeds on the water. They did not wait until the water dissipated. As the water receded, the seeds germinated and developed roots. When the water had fully receded but the soil was still moist, the roots of the wheat and barley plants had a head start. These roots then penetrated the moist fertile soil and in a few weeks yielded a bountiful harvest. Since they started early with the sowing, they could produce two grain crops in one year. Other nations around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers copied this technique. Egypt was known throughout the ancient world for its production of grain. This is evident in the Bible, in chapter forty-two of Genesis, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain during a famine. This method of growing grain by throwing the seeds on the flood waters was called “kar- souf- dar- metz” by the ancient Egyptians. It literally means “flood farming.”

Now that we have reviewed the first use of the phrase “cast your bread upon the waters,” let’s see if we can extract some spiritual and practical truths from “flood farming.”

## **Exposition**

### **1. Start Early Doing Good, Productive Things.**

(Jesus Was Twelve When He Went To The Temple.)

### **2. It Is Good To Connect Faith & Reason.**

(They Combined Biology, Meteorology, and Theology.)

(They Also Used Mathematics - They Had To Time It Just Right.)

### **3. Seek To Turn A Negative Into A Positive.**

(The Flooding Of The Nile Became An Asset.)

(Maximize Productivity With Creativity.)

### **4. Stand Back And See The Results & Give God Glory.**

(God Rewards Faith And Dedication.)

## **Closing Statements**

We are sowing seeds all the time. Several questions come to mind. What kind of seeds are we sowing and where are we sowing them?

Are we “flood farmers?”

I will close with a little saying in the public domain:

“Sow a thought, reap an attitude.  
Sow an attitude, reap an action.  
Sow an action, reap a lifestyle.  
Sow a lifestyle, reap a destiny.  
Sow a destiny, reap an eternity.”

Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

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