

**Ecclesiastes 11: 3 and 4; “Wise Sowing & Reaping”, Message # 75 in the series –
“Remember your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
June 13th, 2021, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

In our last study we saw that “casting your bread upon the waters” meant two things. It means, for the Christian, that you should give out of your literal bread, your earthly supply of bread (food, resources, money), to those who are in need around you. And you should give of your spiritual bread, which is the truth of the word of God, to needy people around you, that they might be saved and strengthened in their faith. The reason for this, he states; “For you do not know what evil will be upon the earth”. In other words, you do not know what will happen in the future; what might happen to your health and strength, or what outside forces and situations might prevent you from doing good again. God, and all godly people would agree; do it now while you have the ability.

Solomon now goes on to build upon this principle of godly giving. He gives us illustrations, both physical and spiritual, because he wants us to do good to people around us in order that we might spiritually prosper and strengthen the kingdom of God. Each of us needs to think about whether we are putting these principles into practice. In verses 3 and 4, Solomon is showing us 1st of all – The principle that a wise Christian is like a cloud full of rain; they pour themselves out upon others around them. 2nd – The principle that a wise Christian knows that they are like a tree, and so they will think about where it is that they will eventually fall and lie. And 3rd – The principle that a wise Christian will not always be observing the wind or the clouds; those things which might hinder his sowing and his reaping for Christ.

1st – The principle that a wise Christian is like a cloud full of rain; they pour themselves out upon others around them.

“If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth....” The clouds, here mentioned, which are full of rain, represent Christian people who have been given much. The “earth” is a word picture which represents the many needy people who are around us. And, as such, Christians ought, of themselves, to give of their abundance. They ought to be pouring out what they have upon others around them. This doesn’t mean that you should be burning yourself out for others, but rather that you would be giving of what you have been given, to help others.

There are those Christians who are full of earthly wealth. They have been given many earthly blessings. And there are those Christians who have been given great spiritual wealth as well. They have been given so many spiritual blessings, they ought to give of what they have to help others. You will very seldom see a full, dark, cloud that will not do so. And if you do see it withholding its rain, you wonder about it. Lately, around here, you have seen it do this very thing. Dark clouds will come up, but there is no rain given. I believe that this may be an indication that God is not pleased with us. If God is pleased with a people, then He will give them rain in its season. If He is not, He will withhold it.

Look at Amos Chapter 4, verse 7. “I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest.” “I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city.” “One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered.” “So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me, says the Lord.” You can see here the reason that God withheld the rain, can’t you? It was so those who had been sinfully straying and wandering away would return to God. It was so that they might see who the source of all blessings is. When God withholds rain from us here in Tama, three months from the harvest, and still we do not return to Him, it does not bode well for us in terms of His blessing this city which we live in.

People falsely think that mother nature gives rain rather than God. And then they wonder why He is offended. They say that they believe in God, but they cannot acknowledge His sovereignty over the weather. No, we should see and acknowledge and live by this truth; that it is God who gives us every blessing that we have. And spiritually speaking, it is God who alone gives us the ability to be able to benefit others by pouring out the spiritual blessings of truth and good works, to people around us. I hope that you can see, that you and I as believers, are being compared here in verse 3, to clouds which are full of the rain of God's blessings. In this we are becoming more like Christ Himself.

Turn with me over to John chapter 1, verse 16. "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace." So, we see here that each Christian has received of the fullness of Christ's grace, and because of it, they should desire to use what they have, pouring it out in service to their precious Savior. Turn with me, also, over to Job Chapter 29, verses 21-23, and you will see that Job was one of those who had been given great spiritual wisdom from God to give to others. He was indeed a cloud full of God's blessings. "Men listened to me and waited, and kept silence for my counsel." "After my words they did not speak again, and my speech settled on them as dew." "They waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouth wide as for the spring rain."

This was God's blessing to Job and to them. He was the cloud full of the rain of God's wisdom. And they looked to him to be given wise counsel. What a blessing godly men are to a church and to a nation. They are clouds full of rain that empty themselves upon the earth. But ungodly men and false teachers are described in Jude 12 in this way: "These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves." "They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

So, what should we do if we find that we are in drought conditions, either in our community, or in our soul? Well 2nd Chronicles 7: 13 tells us. "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." The way that our land will be healed in our day is when godly men, men who hold to the Scriptures, are raised up to "water" the souls of many people. And the people listen.

And we ourselves can help our own land when the gifts and resources that God has given to us, are not all being selfishly used on ourselves, but being used in Christ's service to help others in need. Proverbs 11: 25 – "The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself."

2nd – The principle that a wise Christian knows that they are like a tree, and so they will think about where it is that they will eventually fall and lie.

"And if a tree falls to the south or the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie." If the "clouds" mentioned in this verse are a reference to people, then we can also reasonably conclude that "a tree" which falls to the south or the north is also a reference to a person. In the Bible, people are often compared to trees. Psalm 1, verse 3 – "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." Psalm 37: 35 – "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a native green tree." "Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more."

The tree falling to the north or to the south, I believe, refers to the spiritual condition of the person when they die. When a tree falls, it is certainly dead at that time. The direction that it falls is important, however, because "there it will lie". Look over at Isaiah Chapter 14, verses 12-19a. Speaking of the king of Babylon who was influenced by the same spirit as Lucifer had when

he fell, which was a spirit of pride; it says – “For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’” “Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.” “Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners?’” “All the kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory, everyone in his own house; but you are cast out of your grave like an abominable branch,....”

In other words where that tree fell, there it would lie forever. The king of Babylon, in this case Belshazzar, was a bad tree. He died in his pride and was cast out as an abominable branch. His tree fell to the north because he wanted to sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north, and be like God; and he died in that damnable state, without ever having been humbled, or repenting over his sins. Jesus says in Matthew 12: 33 – “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.” He is speaking here of all people. All people are either bad trees, because of their sins, or they are good trees because they have believed in Jesus Christ and have repented of their sins. They have come to Christ for grace.

There is another good example of this to be found in the Old Testament book of Daniel. In Daniel 4: 13-16 we find Nebuchadnezzar say this. “I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven.” “He cried aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit.’” Nebuchadnezzar did not know what this meant and Daniel had to explain it to him. Look at verses 20-22. “The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home—it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.”

So, you see, it was the king himself who was going to be cut down to the ground for a time, in terms of his kingly power. And after that time, he would come back again into his kingdom and power, when he had learned the lesson not to be proud. God does not teach these kind of merciful lessons except to those whom He is going to have saving mercy upon. His tree fell to the south rather than the north. Verse 34 says, “And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation.” “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.” “No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”

Look at verses 36 and 37 as well. “At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me.” “My counselors resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me” “No I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice.” “And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.” So, in the life of one whom God intends to save and to change to learn His good ways, He may cut them down for a time; He may break their branches off and the tree be cut down to the roots, but He can graft them back in again, and cause them to flourish and grow. God had great mercy upon Nebuchadnezzar unto the salvation of his soul; to teach him not to be a proud man, but to humbly give glory to Him.

And 3rd – The principle that a wise Christian will not always be observing the wind or the clouds; those things which might hinder his sowing and reaping for Christ.

Verse 4 says – “He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.” The wind would be a legitimate obstacle to sowing of seed. The seed might be cast from the hand, and not land where it should, to be planted correctly. But in this particular verse it means that if you will take notice of all the difficulties that might exist in regard to your sowing and reaping, you will never get the job done at all. So it is with anything good that we desire to do for Christ’s cause and kingdom. If you simply look at the adversity or the difficulty of doing a good work, or of sowing the seed of the word of God, then you will neither sow nor reap. We will look more in depth at these things in our next study.

But now, in closing, let us look at Psalm 126. “When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream.” “Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.” “Then they said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’” “The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad.” “Bring back our captivity O Lord, as the streams in the South.” “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy.” “He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

The Lord brought back the captivity of Zion when Cyrus the Persian king decided to let the Jews go back to their homeland and build their temple once again. He was a heathen king, and yet the Lord moved in his heart to do this thing. It brought them to joy and laughter over what an extraordinary providence it was. The Lord had done great things for them. Similarly, for the Christian, he has been brought out of his captivity to sin through the sufferings of his Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He sowed His life as a seed in the ground in His death, and has reaped a great harvest.

Even so, Christians should see that their prayers and their tears and their labors to sow the seed of the word of God, will bring a harvest. Doing good works for your Master will doubtless bear fruit in the coming day when the Lord will return. In the day of the resurrection Christ will come again and bring all of his saints with Him; the sheaves of His righteous labors and sufferings. And when He returns, those believers who have sown in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. Those who have sown to righteousness, and those who have sown the word of God, shall have something very tangible to show for it. It shall be revealed in that day, what the labors of each Christian were, and those labors shall be rewarded by our Lord Himself. Let us all work toward that great Day, with our eye fixed on Jesus and keep the eternal reward of serving Him here and now, in our view.