

ECCLESIASTES 11: 1 Cast your bread on the waters; for you shall find it after many days.

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Give alms to all, Ecc 11:1-4. The works of God unknown to man, Ecc 11:5. Diligence necessary, Ecc 11:6. Prosperity frequently succeeded by adversity, Ecc 11:7, Ecc 11:8. There will be a day of judgment, Ecc 11:9, Ecc 11:10.

Verse 1

Cast thy bread upon the waters - An allusion to the sowing of rice; which was sown upon muddy ground, or ground covered with water, and trodden in by the feet of cattle: it thus took root, and grew, and was found after many days in a plentiful harvest. Give alms to the poor, and it will be as seed sown in good ground. God will cause thee afterwards to receive it with abundant increase. The Targum understands it of giving bread to poor sailors. The Vulgate and my old Bible have the same idea. Send thi brede upon men passing waters.

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ECCLESIASTES 11: 2 Give a portion to seven, yes, even to eight; for you don't know what evil will be on the earth.

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Verse 2

Give a portion to seven - Never cease giving while thou seest a person in distress, and hast wherewithal to relieve him.

Thou knowest not what evil - Such may be the change of times, that thou mayest yet stand in need of similar help thyself. Do as thou wouldst be done by.

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ECCLESIASTES 11: 3 If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth; and if a tree falls toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falls, there shall it be.

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Verse 3

If the clouds be full of rain - Act as the clouds; when they are full they pour out their water indifferently on the field and on the desert. By giving charity indiscriminately, it may be that thou wilt often give it to the unworthy: but thou shouldst ever consider that he is an object of thy charity, who appears to be in real want; and better relieve or give to a hundred worthless persons, than pass by one who is in real distress.

Where the tree falleth, there it shall be - Death is at no great distance; thou hast but a short time to do good. Acquire a heavenly disposition while here; for there will be no change after this life. If thou die in the love of God, and in the love of man, in that state wilt thou be found in the day of judgment. If a tree about to fall lean to the north, to the north it will fall; if to the south, it will fall to that quarter. In whatever disposition or state of soul thou diest, in that thou wilt be found in the eternal world. Death refines nothing, purifies nothing, kills no sin, helps to no glory. Let thy continual

bent and inclination be to God, to holiness, to charity, to mercy, and to heaven: then, fall when thou mayest, thou wilt fall well.

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ECCLESIASTES 11: 4 He who observes the wind won't sow; and he who regards the clouds won't reap.

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Verse 4

He that observeth the wind shall not sow! - The man that is too scrupulous is never likely to succeed in any thing. If a man neither plough nor sow till the weather is entirely to his mind, the season will in all probability pass before he will have done any thing: so, if thou be too nice in endeavoring to find out who are the impostors among those who profess to be in want, the real object may perish, whom otherwise thou mightest have relieved, and whose life might have been thereby saved. Those very punctilious and scrupulous people, who will sift every thing to the bottom in every case, and, before they will act, must be fully satisfied on all points, seldom do any good, and are themselves generally good for nothing. While they are observing the clouds and the rain, others have joined hands with God, and made a poor man live.

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ECCLESIASTES 11: 5 As you don't know what is the way of the wind, nor how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child; even so you don't know the work of God who does all.

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Verse 5

As thou knowest not - the way of the spirit - Why God should have permitted such an such persons to fall into want, and how they came into all their distresses, thou canst not tell, no more than thou canst how their soul is united to their body, how it came to inform that body, or how the child was formed in the womb of its mother. Nor canst thou discern the end which God has in view in these things. He maketh all, every thing is open to him; and take heed lest, while pretending motives of scrupulosity and prudence, in not relieving the distresses of those thou pretendest to suspect to be unworthy, he does not see that a love of money is the motive of thy conduct, and a want of the bowels of mercy the cause why thou drivest this suspected beggar from thy door.

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ECCLESIASTES 11: 6 In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening don't withhold your hand; for you don't know which will prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both will be equally good.

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Verse 6

In the morning sow thy seed - Be ready at all times to show mercy; begin in the morning, continue till the evening. Thou knowest not the most worthy object; it is enough that God knoweth; and if thy motive be good, he will applaud and reward thee; not according to the worthiness or unworthiness of the object of thy charity, but according to the motive which induced thee to relieve him.

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ECCLESIASTES 11: 7 Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to see the sun.

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Verse 7

Truly the light is sweet - Life is dear to every man as the light of the sun is to the eye. A man would give all that he has for his life, and it is particularly dear to him when he is in ease and affluence: but let each remember that,

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ECCLESIASTES 11: 8 Yes, if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that comes is vanity.

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Verse 8

If a man live many years - And even have prosperity through the whole; yet the days of darkness - times of affliction, weakness, and perhaps old age, will be many. If he die not a violent death, which no man can wish, he will die a lingering death; and this is ordinarily attended with many pains, and many sorrows; therefore let him prepare to meet his God; and to carry this thought through life, that all must terminate in death. The writer of Ecclesiasticus, 7:36, has a good saying, similar to this: "Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember thy End; and thou shalt never do amiss;" οὐκ ἄμαρτησεῖς, thou wilt not sin.

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ECCLESIASTES 11: 9 Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgement.

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Verse 9

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth - Youth is devoid of cares; and, consequently, of many perplexities and distresses. Were it not so, we should have no old men; nay, perhaps not one even of middle age. It is in the order of a most gracious God, that the young should rejoice in their youth; but they should make such a moderate use of all their enjoyments, that they may not be confounded in the day of judgment. But, O young man, if thou wilt follow the propensities of thy own heart, the noisy mirth of the fool, and the dissipation of the profligate - go on; take thy full swing; but take this with thee, that "for all these things, God will judge thee;" and if the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

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ECCLESIASTES 11: 10 Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

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Verse 10

Therefore remove sorrow - אַעַס caas, anger; every kind of violent passion, all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. "Childhood and youth are vanity;" they pass away and come to nothing. Eternity alone is permanent; live for eternity.