

Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters

William MacDonald:

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.” (Eccl. 11:1)

Bread here is probably used, figuratively, for the grain from which it is made. In Egypt, seed was sown on flooded areas. As the waters receded, the crop came forth. But it did not happen immediately. The harvest came “after many days.”

Today we live in an “instant” society, and we want instant results. We have instant mashed potatoes, instant tea, coffee and cocoa, instant soup and instant oatmeal. Also, we have instant credit at the bank and instant replays on TV.

But it is not like that in Christian life and service. Our kindnesses are not rewarded immediately. Our prayers are not always answered right away. And our service does not usually produce immediate results.

The Bible repeatedly uses the agricultural cycle to illustrate spiritual service. “A sower went forth to sow...” “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” “First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” It is a gradual process, over an extended period of time. The squash grows more quickly than an oak tree, but it still takes time.

Therefore, to expect instant results from our uncalculating deeds of kindness is unrealistic. To expect immediate answers to prayer is immature. To press for a decision the first time a person hears the Gospel is unwise. Certainly the normal experience is to give, pray and serve untiringly over a protracted period of time. You do so with the confidence that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. After a while, you see results, not enough to inflate you with pride, but enough to encourage you to press on. The full results will not be known till we reach heaven—which is—after all, the best and safest place to see the fruit of our labors.