

Lessons From Nature

A Sermon

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“Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rooks for the conies.”—[Psalm 104:17-18](#).

THIS PSALM IS ALL through a song of nature, the adoration of God in the great outward temple of the universe. Some in these modern times have thought it to be a mark of high spirituality never to observe nature; and I remember sorrowfully reading the expressions of a godly person, who, in sailing down one of the most famous rivers in the world, closed his eyes, lest the picturesque beauties of the scene should divert his mind from scriptural topics. This may be regarded by some as profound spirituality; to me it seems to savor of absurdity. There may be persons who think they have grown in grace when they have attained to this; it seems to me that they are growing out of their senses. To despise the creating work of God, what is it but, in a measure, to despise God himself? “Whoso mocketh the poor despiseth his Maker.” To despise the Maker, then, is evidently a sin; to think little of God under the aspect of the Creator is a crime. We should none of us think it a great honor to ourselves if our friends considered our productions to be unworthy of admiration, and rather injurious to their minds than improving. If when they passed our workmanship they turned their eyes away, lest they should suffer injury by looking at it, we should not regard them as very respectful to ourselves; surely the despising of that which is made is somewhat akin to the despising of the Maker himself. David tells us that “The Lord shall rejoice in his works.” If he rejoices in what he has made, shall not those who have communion with him rejoice in his works also? “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein.” Despise not the work, lest thou despise the worker.

This prejudice against the beauties of the material universe reminds me of the lingering love to Judaism, which acted like a spell upon Peter of old. When the sheet knit at the four corners descended before him, and the voice said, “Rise, Peter; kill, and eat,” he replied that he had not eaten anything that was common or unclean. He needed that the voice should speak to him from heaven again and again before he would fully learn the lesson, “What God hath cleansed that call not thou common.” The Jew thinks this and that unclean, though Christ has cleansed it; and certain Christians appear to regard nature as unclean. The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, the glorious sunrise and sunset, the snow-clad Alps, the ancient forests, the mysterious glaciers, the boundless ocean, God hath cleansed them: call them not common. Here on this earth is Calvary where the Savior died, and by his sacrifice,

offered not within walls and roofs, he made this outer world a temple wherein everything doth speak of God's glory. If thou be unclean, all things will be unclean to thee; but if thou hast washed thy robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb, and if the Holy Spirit hath overshadowed thee, then this world is but a nether heaven; it is but the lower chamber of which the upper story glows with the full splendor of God, where angels see him face to face, and this lower story is not without glory, for in the person of Christ Jesus we have seen God, and have communion and fellowship with him even now.

It appears to me that those who would forbear the study of nature, or shun the observation of its beauties, are conscious of the weakness of their own spirituality. When the hermits and monks shut themselves out from the temptations of life, foolish persons said, "These are strong in grace." Not so, they were so weak in grace that they were afraid to have their graces tried. They ran away from the battle like the cowards they were, and shut themselves up because they knew their swords were not of the true Jerusalem metal, and they were not men who could resist valiantly. Monasticism was the confession of a weakness which they endeavored to cover with the vain show of humility, and the presence of superior sanctity. If my graces are strong, I can look upon the outward world, and draw forth its good without feeling its evil, if evil there be; but if my religion is mainly fictitious, then hypocrisy dictates to me the affectation of unusual spirituality, or at any rate I have not grace enough to rise from a contemplation of the works of God to a nearer fellowship with God himself. It cannot be that nature of itself debases me, or diverts me from God; I ought to suspect a deficiency in my self when I find that the Creator's handiworks have not a good effect upon my soul.

Moreover, rest assured brethren, that he who wrote the Bible, the second and clearest revelation of his divine mind, wrote also the first book, the book of nature; and who are we that we should derogate from the worth of the first because we esteem the second. Milton's "Paradise Regained" is certainly inferior to his "Paradise Lost," but the Eternal God has no inferior productions, all his works are master-pieces. There is no quarrel between nature and revelation, fools only think so: to wise men the one illustrates and establishes the other. Walking in the fields at eventide, as Isaac did, I see in the ripening harvest the same God of whom I read in the word that he covenanted that seed-time and harvest should not cease. Surveying the midnight skies, I remember him who, while he calls the stars by their names, also bindeth up the broken in heart. Who will may neglect the volume of creation, or the volume of revelation, I shall delight in them both as long as I live.

Let us, then, follow David this morning, for when he wrote our text, he evidently traveled amongst the works of God, admiring and adoring. Let us go with him, and see if there be not something to be learned among the birds and storks, the wild goats and the conies.

I. Our first observation from our text shall be this: FOR EACH PLACE GOD HAS PREPARED A SUITABLE FORM OF LIFE. For the fir trees, the stork; for the high hills, the wild goat, or steinbock; for the rocks, the conies, or rabbits. Almost every part of God's

world was meant to be the abode of some creature or another. On earth, a countless company wait upon the Lord for meat; and as for the sea, it contains “creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts.” Among the trees which shade the brooks, the birds are singing; in the tall sombre pine, the silent storks are building their nests; on the lofty crags, virgin as yet to human foot, the chamois leaps from ledge to ledge; and away, where human voice was never heard, the marmot, the mouse, and the rabbit (whichever creature the Hebrew may mean) find their dwelling-place among the rocks. The teaching of this fact is clear. We shall find that for all parts of the spiritual universe God has provided suitable forms of divine life. Think out that thought a moment. *Each age has its saints.* The first age had its holy men, who walked with God: and when the golden age had gone, and men everywhere had polluted themselves, God had his Noah. In after days, when men had again multiplied upon the face of the earth, and sin abounded, there was Job in the land of Uz, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob dwelling in tents in the land which had been given to them by promise. On whatever period of the world’s history you choose to place your finger you may rest assured that as God is there, so is there also some form of the divine life extant; some of God’s twice born creatures are to be found even in the most barren ages. If you come to a period like that of Ahab, when a lonely Elijah bitterly complains, “I, only I am left, and they seek my life to destroy it,” you shall hear a still small voice that saith, “Yet have I reserved unto myself seven thousand men that have not bowed the knee to Baal.” God has still his elect remnant in the most wicked times to whom he has given a banner, because of the truth. When the light was almost gone from Israel, and formalism had eclipsed the sun of Judaism, there were still a Simeon and an Anna waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Times of fearful persecution, when to mention the name of Christ was to sentence yourself to death, have not been devoid of saints, but rather in the hottest times of oppression God has brought forth heroes equal to the emergency. The fiercer the trial the stronger the men. The church of God, like the fabled Salamander, has lived and flourished amid the flames, and has seemed to feed upon the flames that threatened to devour her. As on the crags where it appears impossible for life to exist God places wild goats, so on the high crags of persecution he upholds men whose feet are like hind’s feet, and who glory as they tread upon their high places. Oppression brings out the heavenly manhood of the saints and lets the devil see what strength God can put into the weakness of man. There have been times of heresy too—such as the age of rampant Arianism, but saints have outlived it. God has provided for such an emergency brave defenders of the faith. What a man was Athanasius, when standing upright and alone he said, “I know that Jesus Christ is very God, and if all the world believe the contrary, I, Athanasius, stand against the world.” Sardis may have a name to live and be dead, but the Lord saith, “thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.” Is not this an encouraging truth, for as it has been in the past it is in the present, and it will be in the future. Do

not give way to gloomy forebodings as to the church's future welfare. Whine not with those who deplore these evil days, and prognosticate overwhelming ills. We are told that we are passing through a crisis, but I recollect that it was a crisis twenty years ago, and our grandsires could tell us of a crisis every year of the last fifty. The fact is there is no such crisis as is talked of. *The crisis* is past, for Christ said, "Now; is the crisis of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." When Jesus went to Golgotha and bled and died, the crisis of the church and of the world was over; the victory of truth and of Christ was secured beyond all hazard. Even if times should darken and the night should grow thicker and thicker, rest assured that he who has the conies for the rocks, and goats for the high hills, and finds for the forests the stork, will find for every age a suitable form of Christian life that shall bring glory to his name.

As it has been in every age, so is it in *every position* in which men are found. Go into all classes of society, and you shall find that the Christian religion, if received in truth, is equally well adapted for all conditions. Here and there upon the throne have been found those that have feared God, and have gone from a crown on earth to a crown in heaven. There can be no better qualification for swaying a kingdom than obedience to the King of kings. Go straight down from the palace to the poor-house, little enough of comfort there, but the richest consolation which can be found for the meanest pauper, will be brought by that hand which was nailed to the tree. He it is that can console the sorrows of poverty as well as sanctify the risks of wealth. Go ye where ye will amongst the busy, whose cares buzz around them, and you shall find no relief for aching heads like a contemplation of the love of Christ: or go amongst those who have leisure, and spend it in solitude, no meditation can be so sweet to while away their hours as the meditation which springs out of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Glory be to God, no man need say, "My trade does not permit me to be a Christian;" if it be so, you have no business to follow that trade, for no lawful calling is without its saint. Up there among the precipices the wild goat finds safe footing, and so amid dignity and honor saints can survive, and in the dark rock-rifts of this sin-smitten city, as conies live among the rocks, so Christian men are useful and happy. Where the believer is persecuted on every side, he shall not be forsaken, and where, through the example of the wicked, his heart is grieved, he shall be preserved like righteous Lot. As God maintains life in every region, so doth he maintain spiritual life in every position and every calling. Have comfort in this you who are placed in circumstances unfavourable to grace.

Again, you shall find spiritual life *in every church*. I know it is the notion of the bigot, that all the truly godly people belong to the denomination which he adorns. Orthodoxy is my doxy; heterodoxy is anybody else's doxy who does not agree with me. All the good people go to little Bethel, and nowhere else: they all worship at Zoar, and they sing out of such-and-such a selection, and as for those who cannot say Shibboleth, and lay a pretty good stress on the "h," but who pronounce it "Sibboleth;" let the fords of the Jordan be taken, and let

them be put to death. True, it is not fashionable to roast them alive, but we will condemn their souls to everlasting perdition, which is the next best thing, and may not appear to be quite so uncharitable. Many suppose that because there is grievous error in a church, concerning an ordinance or a doctrine, therefore no living children of God are there. Ah, dear brethren, this severe opinion arises from want of knowing better. A mouse had lived in a box all its life, and one day crawled up to the edge of it, and looked round on what it could see. Now the box only stood in a lumber room, but the mouse was surprised at its vastness, and exclaimed: "How big the world is!" If some bigots would get out of their box, and only look a little way round them, they would find the realm of grace to be far wider than they dream. It is true that these pastures are a most proper place for sheep, but yet upon yonder hill-tops wild goats are pastured by the Great Shepherd. It is true that yonder plains covered with verdure are best fitted for cattle, but the Lord of all has his beasts in the forest, and his conies among the rocks. You may have to look a long while before you find these living things, but *he* sees them when you do not, and it is a deal more important to a cony for God to see it, than it is for a man to see it; and so it is an infinitely more weighty matter for a child of God for his Father to know that he is his child, than for his brother to know it. If my brother will not believe me to be a Christian, he cannot help being my brother; he may do what he will in his unkindness, but if I am one of God's children, and he also is one, the tie of brotherhood cannot be broken between us. I love to think that the Lord has his hidden ones—even in churches that have sadly degenerated from the faith; and, although it is yours and mine to denounce error unsparingly, and with the iconoclastic hammer to go through the land and break the idols of all the churches in pieces as far as God gives us strength, yet there is not a lamb amongst Christ's flock that we would disdain to feed—there is not the least of all his people, however mistaken in judgment, whom our soul would not embrace an ardent love. God, in nature, has placed life in singular spots, and so has he put spiritual life into strange out-of-the-way places, and has his own chosen where least we should look for them.

Once more, there are to be found God's people in *every city*. Some of you are going away, it may be, to the ends of the earth, and this word may be comfortable to you. The Lord has an elect people everywhere. The wild goats are on the rocks, and the conies amongst the stones, and the storks in the trees. Go you where you will, you shall find that God has a living people; or if you should be sent to a country where as yet there are no converted men or women, let not that discourage you, but rather say, "I am sent with the purpose of finding out God's elect, who as yet are hidden in sin. I am to be the instrument of finding out the Lord's own blood-bought but hidden ones here." When thou goest into a city that is given to idolatry, thou shalt hear it said to thee, "I have much people in this city;" go, therefore, and labor to find out the much people. Introduce the gospel, tell of the love of Jesus, and you shall soon find that your efforts are rewarded by the discovery of those who shall love

your Savior, and delight in the same truth which now charms your heart. Do not believe that there is a rock without its wild goat; do not think that there is a fir-forest without its stork; or that there are to be found trees by the brook without their birds. Expect to find where God dwells that there are some who are sojourners with him, as all their fathers were.

I shall leave the first point, repeating the sentence, *for each place there a form of life*.

II. Secondly, the text teaches us plainly that EACH CREATURE HAS ITS APPROPRIATE PLACE. Birds with their nests for the cedars of Lebanon, storks for the fir trees, wild goats for the high hills, and conies for the rocks. Each of these creatures looks most beautiful at home. Go into the Zoological Gardens, and see the poor animals there under artificial conditions, and you can little guess what they are at home. A lion in a cage is a very different creature from a lion in the wilderness. The stork looks wretched in his wire pen, and you would hardly know him as the same creature if you saw him on the housetops or on the fir trees. Each creature looks best in its own place. Take that truth, now, and use it for yourself. Each man has by God a *providential position* appointed to him, and the position ordained for each Christian is that in which he looks best; it is the best for him and he is the best for that; and if you could change his position, and shift him to another, he would not be half as happy, nor half as useful, nor half so much himself. Put the stork on the high hills, put the wild goat on the fir trees—what monstrosities! Take my dear brother who has been a working-man this last twenty years, and always been a spiritually-minded man, and make him Lord Mayor of London, and you would spoil him altogether. Take a good hearer and set him preaching, and he would make a sorry appearance. A man out of place is not seen to advantage, you see the wrong side of him, the gracious side is hidden. The position in which God has placed me is the best for me. Let me remember this when I am grumbling and complaining. It may be I have got past that foolish discontent which is altogether selfish, but perhaps I repine because I think, if I were in a different position, I could glorify God more. This species of discontent is very insinuating, but let us beware of it. It is foolish to cry, “if I were placed in a different position, I could do so much more for God!” You could not do so much as you can do now. I am sure the goat would not show the wisdom of God so well in a fir tree, as he would up on a high hill; and you would not display the grace of God so well anywhere else as you can do where you are. Ah, says the young Christian, “I am only an apprentice; if I were a master man, I think I could then glorify God.” Sir, if you cannot magnify him in your apprenticeship, you will not do so when you become a journeyman. “Oh, but my shop is so little, my trade brings me in such a small amount, I can give but little, and I have such few opportunities of doing good.” Be slow to leave your calling till you have plain indications from providence that you ought to do so, for many a man in moving from his place has been as a bird that has wandered from her nest. God knows better than you what is best for you; bow your soul to his sovereign will. God appoints our position infinitely better than we could appoint it, even if we could have the choosing of it.

My beloved friends, it is not only that each form of life has its own best position as to providence, but it is so as to *experience*. God has not made two creatures precisely alike. You shall gather leaves from a tree, and you shall not find two veined in precisely the same way. In Christian experience it is the same. Wherever there is living Christian experience, it is different from everybody else's experience in some respect. In a family of children each child may be like its father, and yet each child shall be different from each other child; and amongst the children of God, though they all have the likeness of Christ in a measure, yet are they not all exactly the one like the other. You read the other day the life of John Bunyan, and you said, "Oh, if I had experience like John Bunyan, then I should know I was a child of God." This was foolish. The biographies that are published in our magazines in many cases do some good, but more mischief; for there are Christian people who begin at once to say, "Have I felt precisely thus? Have I felt exactly that?—If not, I am lost." Hast thou felt thyself a sinner and Christ a Savior? Art thou emptied of self and dost thou look to Christ alone? Well, if no other soul hath trod the same path as thou hast done, thou art in a right path; and though thy experience may have eccentricities in it that differ from all others, it is right it should be so. God has not made the wild goat like the cony, nor has he made the stork like any other bird, but he has made each to fit the place it is to occupy, and he makes your experience to be suitable to the bringing out some point of his glory, which could not be brought out otherwise. Some are full of rejoicing, others are often depressed; a few keep the happy medium; many soar aloft, and then dive into the deeps again; let these varied experiences, as they are all equally clear phases of the same divine lovingkindness, be accepted, and let them be rejoiced in.

The same holds good as to *individuality of character*. Each creature has its appropriate place, and I believe that each constitution is meant, under the power of grace, to be suitable for a man's position. I might wish to be of a different temperament from what I am—I sometimes think so, but in wiser moments, I would not wish to alter anything in myself but that which is sinful. Martin Luther might have wished that he had been as gentle as Melancthon, but then we might have had no reformation: Melancthon might certainly sometimes have wished that he had been as energetic as Martin Luther, but then Luther might have lacked his most tender comforter, if Melancthon had been as rough as he. Peter might have been improved if he had not been so rough, and John might possibly have been improved if he had been somewhat more firm; but after all, when God makes Peter he is best as Peter, and when he makes John he is best as John, and it is very foolish when Peter wants to be John, and when John pines to be Peter. Dear brethren, the practical matter is, be yourselves in your religion. Never attempt to counterfeit another's virtues, nor try to square your experience according to another man's feelings, nor endeavor to mould your character so that you may look as if you were like a certain good man whom you admire. No, ask the Lord, who made a new man of you, to let your manhood come out as he meant it, and whichever

grace he meant to be prominent, let it be prominent. If you are meant to play the hero and rush into the thick of the battle, then let courage be developed; or if he designed you to lie in the hospital and suffer, then let patience have its perfect work; but ask the Lord to mould you after his own mind, that as he finds a stork for a fir tree and a fir tree for a stork; a hill for a wild goat, and a wild goat for a hill; he will find a place for you, the man, and find for you, the man, the place that he has created for you, There his name shall be most glorified, and you shall be safest. Kick not against the pricks, but take kindly to the yoke, and serve your day and generation till your Master calls you home.

III. Now, briefly, a third point. It appears from the text that EVERY CREATURE THAT GOD HAS MADE IS PROVIDED WITH SHELTER. Birds fly to the trees, and the stork to the fir, the wild goat to the high hills, and the cony to the rocks. There is a shelter for every one of these creatures, great and small. Think a moment, then, if God has made each creature happy, and given a place of refuge to each creature, then, depend upon it, he has not left man's soul without a shelter. And here is an important truth, for every man is certainly in danger, and every thinking man knows it. My God, dost thou shield and shelter the cony in the rock, and is there no rock for me to shelter in? Assuredly thou hast not made man and left him without a refuge; when thou givest to the rock-rabbit the cleft in which he may hide himself, there must be a shelter for man. This must certainly be true, because you and I, if we have observed our inner life, must have felt conscious that nothing here below can fill an immortal soul. You have prospered in business, and have enjoyed good health; but for all that, in quiet moments of reflection, you feel a craving for something not to be found beneath the sun. Have you not felt yearnings after the Infinite,—hungerings which bread cannot satisfy; thirstings which a river could not quench? And are you never conscious—I know I am as a man, I speak not as a Christian now—of cold shiverings of fear, which make the entire manhood to tremble? The mind looks forward and considers, “And shall I live for ever? When my body moulders, shall I continue? Am I a vessel launched upon the river of existence, and shall I be borne onward to a shoreless and mysterious sea? And what will be that sea, and will it be a calm, or tossed with storms?” Or, to change the figure, “I shall sleep, but in that sleep of death, what dreams may come?” Have you never felt all that, and said within yourself, “O that there were a place where I could hide myself, never to tremble more! O that I could grasp something that would satisfy my insatiable lodgings! O that I could get my foot upon a rock, and no longer feel that a quicksand is beneath me! O that I knew of truth sure and indisputable, and possessed a treasure that would enrich me for ever.” Well, then, if you have such longings as these, surely there must be a provision to meet them. The stork has an instinct for building a nest of a certain sort; it is too large a nest to be placed on a bush, she needs a tree; there is a tree somewhere then, for God never made a stork for a tree but he made also a tree for the stork. Here is a wild goat: you put it down on a flat meadow, and it is not happy. Give it the greenest pasture, it looks up and pines.

Rest assured that since those little feet are meant to traverse rocks and crags, there are rocks and crags that are meant for those feet to leap upon. A chamois argues an Alps, and the conclusion is verified by fact. Yonder little cony cannot live anywhere but among the stones; it delights to conceal itself in the fissures of the rock; then be assured there are rocks meant for conies. So for me, with my thirstings, my longings, my pipings, my mysterious instincts—there is a God somewhere, there is a heaven somewhere, there is an atonement somewhere, there is a fullness somewhere to meet my emptiness. Man wants a shelter, there must be a shelter; let us show you what it is.

Beloved, there is a shelter for man from the sense of past guilt. It is because we are guilty that we are fearful: we have broken our Maker's law, and therefore we are afraid. But our Maker came from heaven to earth; Jesus, the Christ of God, came here, and was made man, and bore that we might never bear his Father's righteous wrath, and whosoever believeth in Jesus shall find perfect rest in those dear wounds of his. Since Christ suffered for me, my guilt is gone, my punishment was endured by my Substitute, therefore do I hear the voice that saith, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people! Say unto them, that their warfare is accomplished; for they have received at the Lord's hand double for all their sins." And as for future fears, he who believes in Jesus finds a refuge from them in the Fatherhood of God. He who trusts Christ, says: "Now I have no fear about the present, nor about the future. Let catastrophe follow catastrophe, let the world crash, and all the universe go to ruin; beneath the wings of the Eternal God I must be safe. All things must work together for my good, for I love God, and have been called according to his purpose." What a blessed shelter this is! The little conies in their rock-clefts are perfectly at ease, and so we, when we enter fully into the truth of our adoption of God, are filled with unutterable peace. And as for the present, with its cares, and griefs, and heart-throbs, there is the Holy Ghost abiding in us, the Comforter, and we fly to him, and receive consolations so rich and powerful, that this day we feel at peace in the midst of discomforts, and if perplexed we are not in despair. Brethren, there is a shelter in the atonement of Christ, in the Fatherhood of God, in the abiding presence of the Comforter—there is a shelter for man—would God that all of us had found it!

IV. And now just a moment of your attention will be wanted for the fourth observation, that FOR EACH CREATURE THE SHELTER IS APPROPRIATE. The tree for the bird; the fir tree, a particular and special tree, for the stork; a high hill for the steinbock or ibex, and the rocks for the hyrax or rabbit. Whatever creature it may be, each shall have his own suitable shelter. But you will reply to me, is there a shelter, then, for each individual man? Did you not say that there was only one shelter for manhood? If I did not say it, I certainly will say it now. There is only one shelter under heaven or in heaven for any man or woman born, but yet there is a shelter suitable for each. Christ Jesus suits all sorts of sinners, all sorts of sufferers. He is a Savior as suitable for me as if he came to save me and no one else; but he is a Redeemer as remarkably suitable to every other of his redeemed ones. Note, then,

that there is a refuge in Christ Jesus for those simple trustful natures that take the gospel at once and believe it. These are like the little birds that fly to the trees and build their nests and begin to sing. These are the commonest sort of Christians, but in some respects they are the best. They hear the gospel, believe it to be God's word, accept it, and begin to sing. Jesus Christ exactly suits them, he is a shelter for those chosen birds of the air, whom your heavenly Father daily feed. But there are others of larger intellect, who require unusual support ere they can build their nest and be at ease. These, like the stork, need a special support, and they find it in the gospel. Since they are more weighty with doubt and perplexity, they need substantial verities to rest on; these find great fir-tree doctrines and cedar-like principles in the Bible, and they rest in them. Many of us this day are resting on the immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie. We rest upon the substitution of Christ, and repose in the completeness of the atonement. Some get hold of one great principle and some another in connection with the grace of God; and God has been pleased to reveal strong, immovable, eternal, immutable principles in his Word which are suitable for thoughtful and troubled minds to rest on. Moreover, we have in the church of God persons of great reasoning powers: these love the craggy paths of thought, but when they come to Christ and trust in him, though they are like the wild goat and love the high places, they find in the Scriptures good ground for them. The doctrine of election, and all the mysteries of predestination, the deep and wonderful doctrines that are spoken of by the apostle Paul; where is the man of thought who will not be at home among these if he loves sublimity? If you have that turn of mind which delights to deal with the high things of God, which have been the perplexity of men and angels, you shall find yourself at home, and what is better, safe with the gospel. If you are in Christ, you shall have good, solid, safe material for the profoundest meditations. Perhaps, instead of being bold and daring and thoughtful, you are not comparable to the wild goat but you are "a very timid trembling little creature like the cony. If anyone claps his hands, away runs the cony; he fears always. But there is a shelter for conies; and so in the grace of God for very timid trembling people, there is a suitable refuge. Here is a delightful shelter for some of you to run into. "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God." Here is another—"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Many a poor trembler has hidden under that condescending word. If I cannot find shelter in one text, what a blessing it is the Bible is full of promises, and there are promises in the Bible which seem made for a certain form of mind, as if the Holy Ghost cast his thoughts and his words into all sorts of moulds to suit the habits of thought and mind of all whom he would bless. O trembling soul, though thou art half afraid to say that thou belongest to Jesus, yet come and rest in him, hide in the rift of his side, and thou art safe.

V. Now we must close, and we do so with this observation, that EACH CREATURE USES ITS SHELTER, for the storks have made their nests in the fir trees, and the wild goats

climb the high hills, and the conies hide among the rocks. I never heard of one of these creatures that neglected its shelter—they love their natural abodes; but I have heard of men who have neglected their God, I know women who have forgotten Christ. We say, “silly sheep.” Ah, if the sheep knew all about us, they would wonder we should call them silly. The cony in danger which does not seek its rock is foolish; but the soul in danger which does not seek its Savior is insane—insane, nay, if there can be a madness which is as much beyond madness, as madness is beyond sanity, then such is the raving lunacy of a man who neglects the Savior. I have never heard of any of these creatures that they despise the shelter provided. The birds are satisfied with the trees, and the stork with the firs, and even the cony with its rock-hole; but, alas! there are men who despise Christ. God himself becomes the shelter of sinners, and yet sinners despise their God. The Son of God opens his side and lays bare his heart that a soul may come and shelter there in the crimson cleft, and yet that soul for many a day refuses to accept the shelter. Oh, where are tears? Who shall give us fit expressions for our sorrow that men should be such monsters to themselves, and to their God? The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master’s crib; but men know not God. The stork knows its fir tree, the wild goat its crag, and the cony knows its cleft, but the sinner knows not his Christ. Ah, manhood, what has befallen thee? What strange wine of Gomorrah hast thou drank which has thus intoxicated thee!

One other thing, I never heard of a stork that when it met with a fir tree demurred as to its right to build its nest there, and I never heard of a cony yet that questioned whether it had a permit to run into the rock. Why these creatures would soon perish if they were always doubting and fearing as to whether they had a right to use providential provisions. The stork says to himself, “ah, here is a fir tree;” he consults with his mate—“Will this do for the nest in which we may rear our young?” “Ay” says she, and they gather the materials, and arrange them. There is never any deliberation, “May we build here?” but they bring their sticks and make their nest. So the wild goat on the crag does not say, “Have I a right to be here?” No! he must be somewhere, and there is a crag which exactly suits him; and he springs upon it. Yet though these dumb creatures know the provision of their God, the sinner does not recognize the provisions of his Savior. He quibbles and questions, “May I?” and “I am afraid it is not for me,” and “I think it cannot be meant for me; and I am afraid it is too good to be true.” And yet nobody ever said to the stork, “Whosoever buildeth on this fir tree shall never have his nest pulled down.” No inspired word has ever said to the cony, “Whosoever runs into this rock-cleft shall never be driven out of it;” if it had been so, it would make assurance doubly sure. And yet here is Christ provided for sinners, just the sort of a Savior sinners need, and the encouragement is added, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;” “Whosoever will let him come, and take the water of life freely.” O dear brothers and sisters, do not be standing out against the generosity of a sin-pardoning God, who bids the sinner come and welcome. Come, believe in Jesus, and find salvation

now. O that you would come, it is what God has provided for your wants. Come, take it, for he bids you come. “The Spirit and the bride say come, and whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely.” To believe is to trust Jesus, to trust his suffering, to trust his atonement, and rely upon him alone for salvation. May God enable you to do it for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 104.