

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

IN THE HAY-FIELD.

A Sermon

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"He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle."—Psalm civ. 14.

WE who are condemned to live in this great wilderness of brick are very likely to forget the seasons altogether; and our friends who live out in the green country, and see the changing seasons, are quite as apt to hear the voices of the seasons with their ears only, but not to learn the inward meaning with their hearts. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter, are God's four evangelists whom he sends into this world to teach those who are willing to be taught; but the most of men are far too much intent upon the problem of how they may be fed, to care for spiritual instruction. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." As for others, in whom the god of this world is reigning, they will not hear, though heaven, and earth, and hell, should mingle their voices into one great thunder-clap. Just now all the world is busy with ingathering the hay, and you could scarcely ride for a few minutes in the country without enjoying the delicious fragrance of the hay-field, and hearing the sharpening of the mower's scythe. I believe there is a gospel in the hay-field, and that gospel we intend this morning to bring out as we may be enabled.

Our text conducts us at once to the spot, and we shall therefore need no preface. "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle"—three things we shall notice; first, that *grass is in itself instructive*; secondly, that *grass is far more so when God is seen in it*; and thirdly, that *by the growth of grass for the cattle, the ways of grace may be illustrated*.

I. First then, "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle." Here we have something WHICH IS IN ITSELF INSTRUCTIVE. There is scarcely any emblem, with the exception of water and light, which you will find more frequently used by inspiration than the grass of the field.

In the first place, the grass may be instructively looked upon as the symbol of *our mortality*, "All flesh is grass." The whole history of man may be seen in the meadow. He springs up green and tender, subject to the frosts of infancy which imperil his young life; he grows, he comes to maturity, he puts on beauty even as the grass is adorned with flowers, and the meads are bedecked with varied hues; but after

awhile his strength departs, and his beauty is wrinkled even as the grass withers, and is followed by a fresh generation, which withers in its turn. Like ourselves, the grass ripens but to decay. The sons of men come to maturity in due time, and then decline and wither as the green herb. Some of the grass is not left to come to ripeness at all, but the mower's scythe suddenly removes it, even as swift-footed death overtakes the careless children of Adam. "In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled." "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." This is very humbling for us to recollect, but we need frequently to be reminded of it, or we dream of immortality beneath the stars. We are and we are not: we are not substance but shadow, our years are as a shadow which declineth; and, as for our age, it is gone as a weaver's shuttle; we pass away like the swift ships; we fly as the eagle; we burst as the bubble; we sink back into the wave of time that bears us as the foam dissolves into the sea.

"Great God, how infinite art thou!
What worthless worms are we!"

We ought never to tread upon the grass without remembering that whereas the green sod covers our graves, it also reminds us of them, and preaches with every blade it hath, a sermon to us concerning our mortality, of which the text is, "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field."

In the second place, grass is frequently used in Scripture as an emblem of *the wicked*. David tells us from his own experience that the heart of a righteous man is apt to grow envious of the wicked when he sees the prosperity of the ungodly. We have seen them spreading themselves like green bay trees, and apparently fixed and rooted in their places; and when we have smarted under our own troubles, and felt that all the day long we were scourged, and chastened every morning, we have been apt to say, "How is this just? How can this be consistent with the moral government of God?" but we are reminded that in a short time we shall pass by the place of the wicked, and lo, it shall not be; we shall diligently consider his place, and lo, it shall not be, for he is soon cut down as the grass, and withereth as the green herb. The grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth away, and even so shall pass away for ever the glory and excellence of those who build upon the estate of time, and dig for lasting comfort in the mines of earth. It is true, the kings of the earth are most often on the side of evil, and the great ones with their pompous state are usually against the Most High; but let not God's people mourn, though waters of a full cup be wrung out to them, for the portion of the wicked is not for ever; they shall have their day, and then shall come their endless night. They are set in lofty places, but they also stand in slippery places; they shall be brought to destruction as in a moment, "As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image." O ye who know not the Lord, and rest not in the atonement of the Lord Jesus, see to what an end ye shall come—your end shall

be the oven! As the Eastern husbandman gathers up the green herb, and despite its former beauty, casts it into the furnace, such must be your lot. O vainglorious sinners! thus will the judge command his angels, "Bind them up in bundles to burn." Where now your merriment? Where now your confidence? Where now your pride and your pomp? Where now your boastings and your loud-mouthed blasphemies? They are silenced for ever, for, as the thorns crackle under the pot, but are speedily consumed, and leave nothing but a handful of white ashes, so shall it be with the wicked; they shall pass away in the fire of God's wrath, and the flame thereof shall utterly consume them.

It is more pleasing to recollect that the grass is used in Scripture as a picture of *the elect of God*. The wicked are comparable to the dragons of the wilderness, but God's own people shall spring up in their place, for it is written, "In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes;" the desert of sin shall yet be verdant with grace. The elect are compared to grass, because of their number as they shall be in the latter days, and because of the rapidity of their growth. You remember the passage, "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." O that the long expected day might soon come, when God's people should no longer be a little flock, but when a multitude shall come to Christ, and the Redeemer shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. It is said of Zion's children, "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses"—two of the fastest growing things we know of—so shall a nation be born in a day; so shall crowds be converted at once; for when the Spirit of God shall be mightily at work in the midst of the church, men shall fly unto Christ as doves fly to their windows, so that the astonished church shall cry, "These, where had they been?" O that we might live to see the age of gold, the time which prophets have foretold and longed for, when the company of God's people shall be as innumerable as the blades of grass in the meadows, and grace and truth shall flourish where once everything was barrenness.

How like the grass are God's people for this reason, that they are absolutely dependent upon the influences of heaven! Our fields are parched if vernal showers and gentle dews are withheld, and what are our souls without the gracious visitations of the Spirit? Sometimes through severe trials our wounded hearts are like the mown grass, and then we have the promise, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth." Our sharp troubles have taken away our beauty, and lo, the Lord visits us, and we revive again. Thank God for that old saying, which is a gracious doctrine as well as a true proverb, "Each blade of grass has its own drop of dew." God is pleased to give his own peculiar mercies to each one of his own people. "Thy blessing is upon thy people." The river of God, which is full of water, waters the church, which is a vineyard, in which every vine is so dependent upon God that he must be its heavenly dew, or it will dry up at once. As you look at the fields of grass, think of them as being comparable to the great company of the redeemed whom God shall make to grow upon the face of the earth.

Once again, grass is comparable to *the food wherewith the Lord supplies the necessities of his chosen ones*. Take the twenty-third Psalm, and you have the metaphor worked out in the sweetest form of pastoral song, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." Just as the sheep has nourishment according to its nature, and this nourishment is abundantly found for it by its shepherd, so that it not only feeds, but then lies down in the midst of the fodder, satiated with plenty, and perfectly content and at ease; even so are the people of God when Jesus Christ leads them into the pastures of the covenant, and opens up to them the precious truths upon which their souls shall be fed. Beloved, have we not proved that promise true in this house of prayer, "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined"? Why, my soul has sometimes fed upon Christ till I have felt as if I could receive no more, and then I have laid me down in the bounty of my God to take my rest, satisfied with favour, and full of the goodness of the Lord. Whenever you see the sheep at noontide, resting in the rich herbage, beneath the spreading oak, think of that enquiry of Solomon when he said, "Tell me where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon;" and when you see the herds with all their wants supplied, both in summer and in winter, then sing with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

Thus you see the grass itself is not without instruction for those who will incline their ear. It is a memorial of our mortality, and of the passing away of the wicked; it is a picture of the elect of God when watered with the dew of heaven, and an emblem of the spiritual meat with which God will satisfy the sheep of his pasture.

II. In the second place, GOD IS SEEN IN THE GROWING OF THE GRASS. He is seen first as a worker, "He *causeth* the grass to grow;" he is seen secondly as a care-taker, he causeth the grass to grow *for the cattle*.

1. First, as a *worker*, God is to be seen in every blade of grass, if we have but eyes to discern him. A blind world this, which always talks about "natural laws," and "the effects of natural causes," but forgets that laws cannot operate of themselves, and that natural causes, so called, are not causes at all unless the First Cause shall set them in motion. The old Romans used to say, *God* thundered; *God* rained. We say, *It* thunders; *it* rains. What "*it*"? All those expressions are subterfuges to escape from the thought of God. We commonly say, "How wonderful are the works of *nature*!" What is "*nature*"? Do you know what *nature* is? I remember a lecturer in the street, an infidel, speaking about nature, and he was asked by a Christian man standing by whether he would tell him what nature was. "Walk in the fields, and see nature"—"nature did this and nature did that"—these are common phrases, but is there any meaning in them? Is not that an old heathenish way of talking? If we see aright, we see God working everywhere. We frequently talk as if we were trying to thrust our God into the distance. Our good old forefathers, the Puritans, when they wanted rain, used to pray that God would unstop the bottles of heaven; at another time that he would be pleased to bind up the clouds, that

there might not be too much rain; we run to the barometer, or grumble at the bad weather. They referred all natural phenomena to the Most High, and were accustomed to see him at work in all the events of life; we have grown so wise nowadays that we find a thousand second causes interposing between the world and its Maker. Unhappy is the wisdom whose boasted discoveries would fain push us away from our heavenly Father into a wild sea of laws and second causes. To my mind, it would be even better if we could get back to the untutored mind of the Indian, who sees God in every cloud and hears him in the wind. We want our God—we are like orphans without him; and it is well to be reminded, in the simple language of the text, that he is very near us, for he makes the grass to grow for the cattle. The simple production of grass is not the result of natural law apart from the actual work of God; mere law would be inoperative unless the great Master himself sent a thrill of power through the matter which is regulated by the law—unless, like the steam engine, which puts force into all the spinning-jennies and wheels of a cotton-mill, God himself were the motive power to make every wheel revolve. How I could fall down, and find rest on the grass as on a royal couch, now that I know that my God is there at work for his creatures!

Having asked you to see God as a worker, I want you to make use of this—therefore I bid you see God in *common things*. He makes the grass to grow—grass is a common thing. You see it every day everywhere, yet there is God in it. Dissect it and pull it to pieces. There are the attributes of God illustrated in every single flower of the field, and in every green leaf. Come, my friends, see God in your common matters, your daily afflictions, your common joys, your every-day mercies. Do not say, “I must see a miracle before I see God.” In truth, everything is a miracle, everything wonderful, everything teeming with marvel. See God in the bread upon the table and the water of your cup. It will be the happiest way of living if you can say in each providential circumstance, “My Father has done all this.” See him in common things, I say, and see him in little things. The little things of life are the greatest troubles. A man will hear that his house is burned down more quietly than he will bear to see an ill-cooked joint of meat upon his table, when he reckoned upon its being done to a turn. It is the *little* stone which gets into the shoe and makes the pilgrim limp. Oh! but to see God in little things, to believe that there is as much the presence of God in a sere leaf falling from the elm as in the avalanche which crushes a village; to believe that the guidance of every drop of spray, when the wave breaks on the rock, is as much under the hand of God as the guidance of the mightiest planet when steered in its courses; to see God in the little as well as in the great is true wisdom.

Think, too, of God working in the *solitary things*, for the grass does not merely grow around our populous cities, and where men take care of it, but up there on the side of the bleak Alp, where no traveller has ever passed. Where only the eye of the wild bird has beheld their lonely verdure, the moss and the grass come to perfection, and display all their beauty, for God’s works are fair to other eyes than those of mortals. And you, solitary child of God, dwelling far away from any friend,

unknown and obscure, in a remote hamlet; or you in the midst of London, hiding away in your little garret, unknown to fame, and forsaken by friendship, you are not forgotten by the love of heaven. He maketh the grass to grow all alone, and shall not he make you flourish in loneliness? He can bring forth your graces and educate you for the skies in solitude and neglect. The grass, you know, is a thing we tread upon—nobody thinks of grass—men pass over it and have no compassion for the stems which bend beneath their weight, and yet God makes it grow. Perhaps you are oppressed and down-trodden, but let not this depress your spirit, for God executeth righteousness for all those that are oppressed—he maketh the grass to grow, and he can make your heart to flourish under all the oppressions and afflictions of life, so that you shall still be happy and holy though all the world marches over you; still living in the immortal life which God himself bestows upon you though hell itself set its heel upon you. Poor and needy one, unknown, unobserved, oppressed and down-trodden, God makes the grass to grow, and he will take care of you.

As I turned over this text in my mind, to catch the various gleams of light which glance from it as from a prism, I thought, "How many are those blades of grass!" Set a child to count them even in one acre, and how long the task will occupy; and yet each one of those blades God makes to grow as much as if there were not another in all the field. So with all the myriads of God's people—he preserves each child as if he had no other; he loves as much every single one of all the blood-bought seed as if it were the only object of divine grace, the only one that should sing within the pearly gates. Be of good comfort, then, the God who abounds in mercy towards the grass of the field will not forget you.

2. But I said we should see in the text God also as a great *care-taker*. "He causeth the grass to grow *for the cattle*." Doth God, then, care for oxen, or saith he it altogether for our sakes? "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn," shows that God has a care for the beasts of the field; but it shows much more than that, namely, that he would have those who work for him feed as they work. God cares for *the beasts*, and makes grass to grow for them. Then, my soul, though sometimes thou hast said with David, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee," yet God cares for me. You recollect our sermon upon "The Ravens Cry"—"He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry"—there you have an instance of his care for birds, and here we have his care for beasts; and though you, my hearer, may seem to yourself to be as black and defiled as a raven, and as far from anything spiritually good as the beasts, yet take comfort from this text; he gives to beasts their food, and he will give to you, though you think yourself to be beast-like, what your spirit wants at his hands.

Observe, he cares for these beasts who are *helpless* in caring for themselves. The cattle could not plant the grass, nor cause it to grow. Though they can do nothing in the matter, yet he does it all for them; *he causeth the grass to grow*. You who are as helpless as oxen to help

yourselves, who can only stand and moan out your misery, but know not what to do, God can prevent you in his lovingkindness, and favour you in his tenderness. Now let the bleatings of your prayer go up to heaven, let the moanings of your desires go up to him, poor guilty ones, and help shall come to you though you cannot help yourselves. We generally say beasts are *dumb and speechless things*, yet God makes the grass grow for them. Will he hear those that cannot speak, and will he not hear those who can? The beasts shed no tears of penitence, and pour forth no sobs and sighs of fervent prayer, and yet their wants are supplied: will God let that poor young man yonder continue month after month seeking him, and will he not be found of him? Shall that poor woman's briny tears all fall in vain, that poor broken heart cry out in bitterness, and meet with no response? Shall the Lord of mercy answer the beasts, and not hear men who are made in his own image? Since our God views with kind consideration the cattle in the field, he will surely have compassion upon his own sons and daughters when they desire to seek his face. How often the cattle are oppressed by man! I am sure it is painful to see them driven through these streets, bruised and faint, with their poor tongues hanging out of their thirsty mouths. I wish the authorities would provide suitable drinking troughs for them, for at present their sufferings are a disgrace to our city. It is frequently so sickening a sight to see poor tortured cattle in our thoroughfares, that it makes one long to fly from such brutality, and cry—

“Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where sights of cruel men and maddened beasts
Might never reach us more.”

Yet the great God looks after those poor dumb cattle whom men despise. Comfortable thought for some of you who are of the meekest and lowliest spirit. You despise yourselves, and others despise you, but *He* who causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, has an eye to you. Man may have nothing for you but strokes from the rod, thoughtless, heartless man may goad and vex your spirit, and drive you through the streets of this busy world, without so much as a drop of comfort to cool your burning tongue and fevered brain, when you are fainting with many cares and fears, but God thinks of you, God cares for you still. When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, then the Lord will take thee up. The cattle, forlorn as they are have God to think of them, and so have you; shall they be silently trustful, and will you be noisily complaining?

There is this also to be said, God not only thinks of the cattle, taking care of them, but *the food* which he provides for them is fit food—he causeth *grass* to grow for the cattle, just the sort of food which ruminants require. Even thus the Lord God provides fit sustenance for his people. Depend upon him by faith and wait upon him in prayer, and you shall have food convenient for you. You shall find in God's mercy just that which your nature desires, suitable supplies for your grievous wants.

This convenient food the Lord takes care to reserve for the cattle,

for no one eats the cattle's food but the cattle. There is grass for them, and nobody else cares for it, and thus it is kept for them; even so God has a special food for his own people—he knows how to preserve it, too, and keep it for them and them only. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." Though the grass be free to all men who choose to eat it, yet no creature careth for it except the cattle for whom it is prepared; and though the grace of God be free to all men, yet no man careth for it except the elect of God, for whom he prepared it, and whom he prepares to receive it. There is as much reserve of the grass for the cattle as if there were walls around it—no one else eats it—no one else cares for it; and so, though the grace of God be free, and there be no bound set round about it, yet it is as much reserved as if it were restricted, and none might receive it but the elect of God.

God is seen in the grass as the worker and the care-taker: then let us see his hand in *providence* at all times. Let us see it and lean upon it, not only when we have abundance, but even when we have none; for the grass is preparing for the cattle even in the depth of winter. God is preparing and breaking the soil; he is sending the juices into the roots, giving the roots a little rest awhile that they may afterwards bring forth abundance. And you, ye sons of sorrow, in your trials and troubles, are still cared for by God; he has an end to serve in all your griefs and miseries; he will accomplish his own divinely gracious purpose in you: only be still and see the salvation of God. Every winter's night has a direct connection with the joyous days of mowing and reaping, and each time of grief is linked to future joy.

III. Our third head is most interesting. GOD'S WORKING IN THE GRASS FOR THE CATTLE GIVES US ILLUSTRATIONS CONCERNING GRACE.

I ask every Christian here to give me his earnest attention for a few minutes, and I think he may hear something which may cheer him. I will suppose that I am soliloquising, and I will say to myself as I read the text, "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle. Here I perceive a satisfying provision for that form of creature. Now, I am also a creature, but I am a nobler creature than the cattle. I cannot imagine for a moment that God will provide all that the cattle wants and not provide for me. But naturally I feel uneasy: I cannot find in this world what I want—if I were to win all its riches I should still be discontented; and when I have all that heart could wish of time's treasures, yet still my heart feels as if it were empty. There must be somewhere or other something that will satisfy me as a man with an immortal soul. God altogether satisfies the ox; he must therefore have something or other that would altogether satisfy me if I could get it. There is the grass, the cattle get it, and when they have eaten their share, they lie down and seem perfectly contented; now, all I have ever found, as an unconverted man, has never satisfied me so that I could lie down and be content; there must be, then, something somewhere that would content me if I could get at it." Is not that good reasoning? I ask both the Christian and the unbeliever, to go with me so far; but then let us proceed another step: "The cattle do get what they want—not only is the grass provided, but they get it. Well, then, why should not I obtain what I want? I find my soul

hungering and thirsting after something more than I can see with my eyes or hear with my ears: there must be something to satisfy my soul, why should not I find it? The cattle find that which satisfies them: why should not I obtain what would satisfy me? There must be such a thing: I cannot suppose that my heavenly Father made me as a creature without making something also that could satisfy my largest desires. There is such a thing; and surely if the cattle get what they want, I shall not be left unsupplied." Then, I begin to ask in prayer, "What is this which thou, O God, hast provided to satisfy my soul?" And while I am praying, I also meditate and think, "Well, God has given to the cattle something which is consonant to their nature: they are nothing but flesh, and flesh is grass, there is therefore grass for their flesh. But, then, though I am flesh, I am something else besides, I am spirit. Then, if I am to get something to satisfy me, it must be spiritual—a spiritual meat. Where is it?" When I turn to God's word, I find there that though the grass withereth, the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and the word which God speaks unto us is spirit and life. "Oh! then," I say, "here is something spiritual for my spiritual nature, something suitable to me as an immortal being." O may God help me to know what that spiritual meat is, and enable me to lay hold upon it, for I perceive that though God provides the grass for the cattle, *the cattle must eat it themselves*. They are not fed if they lie down and refuse to come and eat. Then what must I do? I must imitate the cattle, and eat that which God provides for me? What do I find provided in Scripture? I find the Lord Jesus Christ laid down as the food of my soul. I am told that he came into this world to suffer, and bleed, and die, instead of me, and that if I trust in him I shall be saved; and, being saved, the thoughts of his love will give solace and joy to me and be my strength, the strength of my life and my portion for ever. I do not find the cattle bringing any purchase-money to the pasture, but they enter it and receive their portion—they open their mouths and receive what they want. Even so do I by an act of faith in Jesus. Lord, give me grace to feed upon Christ; make me hungry and thirsty after him; give me the faith by which I may be a receiver of him, that so I may be satisfied with favour, and full of the goodness of the Lord.

Methinks my text, though it looked small, begins to grow and swell as we meditate upon it. Now, I want to introduce you to a few more thoughts on this matter as illustrations of grace. *Preventing grace may here be seen in a symbol*. Before the cattle were made, in this world there was grass. We find in the first chapter of Genesis, God provided the grass before he created the cattle. And what a mercy that there were covenant supplies for God's people before they were in the world! He had given his Son Jesus Christ to die, to be the sponsor and surety of the elect, before Adam was made in the garden; long before sin came into the world, the everlasting mercy of God foresaw the damages of sin, and provided a refuge for every elect soul. Oh! what a mercy it is for me, that, before I hunger, God has prepared for my hunger; that before I thirst, God has opened the rock in the wilderness to leap forth with crystal streams to satisfy the thirst of my soul! See what sovereign grace can do! Before the cattle come to the pasture,

the grass is grown for them, and before I feel my need of divine mercy, that mercy is provided for me. Then I perceive *an illustration of free grace*, for wherever the ox comes into the field, he brings no money with him. There is the food ready for him, but he brings nothing with which to purchase it. So I, poor needy sinner, having nothing, come, and receive Christ without money and without price. He maketh the grass to grow for the cattle, and so he doth provide grace for my needy soul, though I have now no money, no virtue, no excellence of my own. And why is it, my friends, why is it that God gives the cattle the grass? You will be perhaps surprised when I say to you that the reason is, *because they belong to him*. Here is a text to prove it. "The silver and the gold are mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." That is why he provides grass for them, because they are his own property. How is it that Christ is provided for God's people? Because "the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Of every herd of cattle in the world, God could say, "They are mine." Long before the farmer put his brand, God had set his creating mark upon it. They are God's making, preserving, and feeding altogether. So, before the stamp of Adam's fall was set upon our brow, the stamp of electing love was set there. "In thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."

Another thing may, perhaps, surprise you still more, God feeds the cattle because *he has entered into a covenant with them to do so*. "What! a covenant with the cattle!" says somebody. Ay! truly so, for when God spake to his servant Noah, in that day when all the cattle came out of the ark, we find him, saying, "I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of *the cattle*, and of every beast of the earth with you." So there was a covenant, you see, made with the cattle, and that covenant was that seedtime and harvest should not fail; therefore the earth brings forth for them, and the Lord causes the grass to grow. Does Jehovah keep his covenant with cattle, and will he not keep his covenant with his own beloved? Ah! it is because his chosen people are his covenanted ones in the person of the Lord Jesus, that he provides for them all that they shall need in time and in eternity, and satisfies them out of the fulness of his everlasting love.

Once, again, God feeds the cattle, and then *the cattle praise him*. We find David saying, in the hundredth and forty-eighth Psalm, "Praise the Lord . . . ye beasts and all cattle." They have their music for God. The Lord feeds his people in order that they may praise him, to the end that their glory may sing praise unto him and not be silent. While other creatures give glory to God, let the redeemed of the Lord especially say so, whom he has delivered out of the hand of the enemy.

Nor even yet is our text quite exhausted. Turning one moment from the cattle, I want you to notice the grass. It is said of the grass, "*He causeth the grass to grow*"—here is a mighty blow to free will, because, if the grass does not grow without God's causing it to grow, how is it that grace should be found in the human heart apart from divine operations? Surely grace is a much more wonderful product of divine wisdom, and more complicated than the grass can be! and if grace does not grow without a divine cause, depend upon it grace does

not dwell in us without a divine implantation; and if I have so much as one blade of grace growing within me, I must trace it all to God's divine will. As the grass all depends upon God's causing it to grow, so the grace we have depends upon God's constant kindness and tender loving mercy to make it ripen to perfection. You are a babe as yet in grace, and that you are alive unto God at all is due to God's quickening power; but if ever you are to attain to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, that must be due to the continuous putting forth of the divine energy; there is no having grace, and no growing in grace, except God gives us both the one and the other—for if he causeth grass to grow, much more must grace come from him.

Again, if God thinks it worth his while to make grass, and take care of it, and make it grow, much more will he think it to his honour to cause his grace to grow in my heart. If the great invisible Spirit, whose thoughts are high and lofty, condescends to look after that humble thing which grows by the hedge, surely he will condescend to watch over his own nature, which he calls the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever! Mungo Park, in the deserts of Africa, was much comforted when he took up a little piece of moss, and saw the wisdom and power of God in that lonely piece of verdant loveliness. So when I introduce you to-day to the fields ripe and ready for the mower, how your hearts ought to leap for joy to see how God has produced the grass, caring for it all through the weary months of the long-delayed spring, and the rigorous cold of a suddenly perpetuated winter, until at last he sent the genial rain and sunshine, and brought the fields to their proper condition. And so, my soul, though thou mayst have many a frost and biting winter, and much to bear with, yet he causeth the grass to grow, and he will cause thee to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Once again, you perceive that the grass does not grow without an object—the grass grows *for the cattle*; and then you know what the cattle grow for, they grow for man; so the whole business comes to a point. But, then, what does man grow for? That is the next question. Then, my soul, if there is any good thing growing in thee, it is for a purpose; and thou thyself, if thou art favoured with divine manifestation, art blessed for a purpose; and, as the grass does not refuse to be fed upon by the cattle, take care that thou dost not refuse to yield thyself unto God; and, as the cattle do not refuse to give themselves up to labour and slaughter, so bow thyself, and render thyself to God, for God has an end in sparing and blessing thee, and preserving thee, and strewing thy path with kindnesses. Take care that thou dost not miss this end, for to gain it will be thy happiness as well as God's glory. It should be thy chief end on earth to serve him, and to glorify him for ever above.

I draw to a close when I have noticed that *the existence of the grass is needful to complete the chain of nature*. There would be no cattle if there were no grass; and no cattle, no something else—so the whole chain would go to pieces. So the meanest child of God is necessary to the family. They in heaven without us cannot be made perfect: the little ones are as needful to God's family as the great ones. The Lord cannot, will not, put you away from it, my desponding friends, because, though you

cannot see it, you are one stone in the building; and if you are taken away, what becomes of the next, and the next! Perhaps every heir of heaven is necessary to complete the purpose of God. I said "perhaps," we know it to be so, for we are told by Paul, that we are the fulness of Christ. The church is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Nature would be incomplete without the trembling grass blade; and the economy of grace would be incomplete without you, Mr. Fearing, and you, Mrs. Much-Afraid: you are necessary to complete the divine purpose, in order to let it be seen, world without end, that God is not defeated; that since Christ loved his own, he loved them to the end; that he could say, "Of all which he hath given me, I have lost nothing." Oh, how blessed it is to think of this! Since we are all thus necessary, if saved by grace, let us begin this morning to bless and to praise the God of providence and grace. While the grass, with its verdure, serves God by beautifying the earth, and while the cattle take their turn also in the economy of creation, let each Christian say to himself, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" and having found it, whatsoever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with our might. The Lord bless these remarks to you, and make them profitable to your souls, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm civ.

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