

prison, all the early Christians joyfully witnessing for Christ in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and gladly giving up their soft bodies to be torn by the lions or burned at the stake, were altogether preparing the way of the Lord.

2. *But not they only.* All who antagonize it. Titus, who ruined the city the apostles loved; Nero, who persecuted them with hellish ingenuity; Attila, who scourged Rome as Rome had scourged other nations; all the rancorous and turbulent antagonisms of an anarchical world have been used by Providence to make firm the divine highway; and the worst atrocities of the Dark Ages, even when Christians were the victims, can be seen from our modern historic perspective to have helped on the way of the Lord.

3. *All secular force.* In those degraded times the secular power of the Church was developed in all Israel, until the Pope of Rome became the greatest potentate of the world, and corruptions which had grown in the Church were entrenched and made part of it. But this very centralization and all modern secular forces have been turned into tools by God; and modern mercantile endeavor—explorers, conquering armies, trading vessels—all have helped on the way of the Lord.

4. *You and I, if faithful as home missionaries and as supporters of the foreign work,* can very definitely help to "make his paths straight."

Lesson Word-Pictures.

What a beautiful sight! The great Jehovah stooping as a comforter down to poor, distressed Jerusalem! He wipes away her tears. He whispers words of encouragement. He bids her look heavenward and rejoice. Her Maker is her husband.

But hark!

Can you not hear a far-reaching, penetrating voice? Hear it echoing down through the valleys! Hear it as it breaks out of the wilderness and rings above the banks of Jordan! And look! Behold one in his raiment of camel's-hair, a leathern girdle about his loins. It is the form of the forerunner, and his is the proclamation of the coming, advancing kingdom of God. As it moves on triumphantly, how the aspect of all human life changes. What a different earth this is! How the valleys are exalted and the mountains and hills brought low. How the old wrongs, monstrous and misshapen, are cut down and taken out of the way. Every swollen form of oppression and all rank injustice and the big greed of appetite and ambition are humbled and removed. How the valleys are filled up, all lack of kindness and charity and friendly help disappearing. What a glorious picture is this earth then! The old crookedness in method and practice, the abominable frauds and superstitions, are seen no more.

All the twists in human nature are straightened out. What an evening of things unequal, what an elimination of caste and pride, all rough places becoming plain. O beautiful, glorious the sight of the world when it is one vast level of brotherhood, one great expanse of charity and love, of trust and kindly mutual service.

And coming every-where over the earth, advancing into every quarter, filling all lands, is the glory of the Lord, infinite compassion and holiness and power embodied in the Lord Jesus, making a home among men, finding a tabernacle in every heart. Break forth into singing! All eyes shall see this revelation of the glory of the Lord and all tongues shall confess it. On and on goes this Messianic glory, like the light breaking over the eastern hills and flowing every-where. O this incoming, triumphant, every-where-prevailing glory, God manifested, the Son honored, and man redeemed!

But who can accomplish this? Who of the sons of men can effect this result?

Hark! Another cry!

"All flesh is grass!"

It is one wide field of emerald before us. Like jeweled swords are the grass-blades beaded with the glistening morning dew, and "the flower of the field" lifts its crowns in pride before the early sun. But how quickly changed is the prospect! It is one wide expanse of prostrate, withered stalks, and the beauty of every flower-crown has faded. Human life is as frail and temporary, but rising up out of all this scene of weakness and evanescence, how firm and strong is the word of God, the pledge of the prophecy's fulfillment!

One other voice!

It is the cry of one bringing good tidings of the messenger of the Gospel! What beauty in his very face! What graciousness in his voice! What hope, joy, triumph in his message! The high mountain, how resonant with the gospel story! What beauty every-where! Zion, how rejoicing! Jerusalem, how exalting! What voices of praise and proclamation every-where! O happy hour of the manifestation of God to all the cities of Judah, this latter-day glory, this fullness of Messiah's times!

By Way of Illustration.

Verses 1, 2. "*Speak comfortably . . . iniquity is pardoned.*" A company of gypsies had encamped near a large town. A good lady, doing her Master's work, asked permission to enter one of their vans. She found inside a poor boy lying upon a wretched bed, and evidently at the very point of death. She spoke to him kindly, but received no answer; then stooping down she whispered in his ear the old verse: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that