

they at once. All obedient and reverent seekers will have no difficulty in finding God.

16. And they came with haste. There is nothing like promptness in aiding the soul to find salvation. **And found . . . a babe.** Not "the" babe, as in both the Authorized Version and the Revised. The verb rendered "found" generally means to find after a thorough search or diligent effort. There is no foundation for Olshausen's conjecture that "the cave" in which Christ was born belonged to the shepherds.

17. They made known concerning the saying. To whom is not said, but probably to all those they met at the inn. What an honor to these despised shepherds that they should be the first ones to preach Christ!

18. And all that heard it wondered. Whether the preaching of the shepherds produced any other effect, we know not. In our days, however, too many wonder at the works of Christ in his Church, and go no farther.

19. Mary kept all these sayings. The words of the shepherds, the announcement of the angel, the facts recorded in the preceding chapter, as well as the several prophecies concerning the Messiah. She silently weighed them. This was a time to be silent.

20. And the shepherds returned. With hearts made glad, full of glory and praise, they now return to their everyday work. Happy is the man who neglects no duty, who diligently attends to his daily labors without slighting any spiritual obligations or religious charge. The moments of ecstasy on the mountain of transfiguration, to most of us, are few compared to those of toil in the valleys below among suffering humanity. But, after all, there is no bliss comparable to the knowledge that one is doing his duty.

Thoughts for Young People.

Lessons from the Shepherds.

1. That God loves and honors those who are faithful in secular vocations, as well as in sacred. (Verse 8.)

2. That even the best of men may fear when God's glory is revealed to them. (Verse 9.)

3. That Christ is the Saviour for the lowly as well as the lofty, and "all people" have an interest in him. (Verses 10, 11.)

4. That the humiliation of Christ's coming should not deter men from believing in him. (Verse 12.)

5. That those who hear of Christ should also seek a personal knowledge of him. (Verse 15.)

6. That people should seek Christ at once, and without delay. (Verse 16.)

7. That those who have seen Christ should be messengers of him to others. (Verse 17.)

Lesson Word-Pictures.

It is chilly to-night.

The sheep out in the fields are uneasy.

The morning, though, will be here sometime.

The shepherds fold their robes about their forms closely, and drowsily watch their flocks. They watch the stars too, the white stars, white as the lambs' wool after the washing in the clear-running brooks.

Suddenly, what means this growing light, a star dropping to earth and coming nearer! It flashes, it dazzles their eyes, it takes a human form. The shepherds are afraid. They look away from this figure. Then it speaks in such a stately fashion, and yet in the sweetest tones. It is the angel of the Lord bidding them not fear, and proclaiming the good news of a birth in Bethlehem, of a babe lying in a manger! It is the infant Saviour, Christ the Lord, that comes to the city of David.

Among the shepherds no drowsy one now! All are wide-awake, staring at this strangest wonder, too confused to speak, almost too confused to think—half looking at the herald, half turning away!

Suddenly there is another wonder. The light from the one angel extends on every side, brightens, flashes, grows, and out of this vast luminous cloud project faces, like the one evening star multiplying into the constellations of the heavens, coming nearer, and all looking down at those poor, confused shepherds, a vast canopy of faces, and then they break out into singing!

Such singing as that was! The sweetest, the softest, the grandest tones; the notes of the spring birds singing in the thickets of the Jordan, of the winds sighing through the cedars of Lebanon, of the thunder that goes rolling and rumbling like war chariots over the plain of Esdracelon!

And what a majestic ascription of praise to God it was: "Glory in the highest," and then came heaven's sweet benediction of peace upon this poor, contentious earth!

The chorus is dying down, and, suddenly as it came, the glory vanishes! The light, that rapt vision of angelic forms, the singers and the singing, all gone! The stars are back in their places, and just shepherds, half up and on their knees, their hearts thumping, are staring confusedly toward the heavens.

But the shepherds cannot stay there in the fields. Up they spring, crying, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem!" Yes, they must find the infant Saviour. They are quickly hurrying along the streets of Bethlehem. They wonder if anyone can tell them anything about a baby born this night. Perhaps they ask the innkeeper. He has mangers. I hear them asking if he knows anything about a baby born just now and lying in a manger.

"No, no, good people! I know nothing about any baby in a manger," I hear him saying.