

"You ask me," Francis said, "whether prayer or preaching is more pleasing to God. It is a hard question. In praying we speak to God and hear Him, and live, as it were with angels: the life of angels in preaching we must bring ourselves down to a low level in dealing with men, and live among them in the ways of men, and think men's thought and see with men's eyes, and hear and use men's words. But one consideration is decisive. The only Son of God came down from the bosom of the Father for the salvation of souls. We, too, must follow His pattern. We must give up our quiet, and "go forth to toil." "Such teaching, such lives stirred the masses of men. Crowds of eager inquirers gathered round Francis, and demanded what they must do, bound as they were, by the duties of home and state? In answer to their prayers he drew up a rule for men and women living in the world. Those who subscribed to it were bound to renounce all ill-gotten gain, to abstain from aggressive war and litigation, to observe the utmost simplicity in dress and intercourse and amusements; to give themselves according to opportunity to works of devotion; to meet from time to time for common worship and almsgiving. There was nothing strained or fantastic in the provisions which promised consecration and dignity to ordinary life. . . .

In a solemn and striking form, open to the eyes of all men, the likeness of Christ was recognized as attainable through the offices and powers of every station in life."

In like manner we to-day need to exhibit our great ideal and acknowledge our great aim. We must test our social and national life by Christ teaching. We must strive to move men's souls, for the answer must come from within. "Better men, and better men only, will usher in the better age." It is a call for great sacrifices in the service of Him who taught man to "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." This is to be the first, highest and only motive in all that we do, "For Christ's sake."

Let me now gather up the various ideas I have tried to enforce.

1st. There are social duties to be performed by the Christian as well as individual duties.

2nd. In the whole Bible we find the principles, that must be our guide in performing our social duties.

I. There is a social question of many branches all springing from one trunk.