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*"Christ caring for People
through People"*

April 17

Mark 11 (The Message) The Cursed Fig Tree

12-14As they left Bethany the next day, he was hungry. Off in the distance he saw a fig tree in full leaf. He came up to it expecting to find something for breakfast, but found nothing but fig leaves. (It wasn't yet the season for figs.) He addressed the tree: "No one is going to eat fruit from you again—ever!" And his disciples overheard him.

15-17They arrived at Jerusalem. Immediately on entering the Temple Jesus started throwing out everyone who had set up shop there, buying and selling. He kicked over the tables of the bankers and the stalls of the pigeon merchants. He didn't let anyone even carry a basket through the Temple. And then he taught them, quoting this text:

' My house was designated a house of prayer for the nations; You've turned it into a hangout for thieves.'

19 At evening, Jesus and his disciples left the city.

20-21 In the morning, walking along the road, they saw the fig tree, shrivelled to a dry stick. Peter, remembering what had happened the previous day, said to him, "Rabbi, look—the fig tree you cursed is shrivelled up!" 22-25 Jesus was matter-of-fact:

"Embrace this God-life. Really embrace it, and nothing will be too much for you. This mountain, for instance: Just say, 'Go jump in the lake'—no shuffling or shilly-shallying—and it's as good as done. That's why I urge you to pray for absolutely everything, ranging from small to large. Include everything as you embrace this God-life, and you'll get God's everything.

Dear Christian friends,

The disciples walked daily with Jesus. They saw him heal the sick. They saw him cast out demons. They saw him feed the hungry, walk on water, and calm the wild waves of a storm. Yet still they couldn't understand his complete trust in God and his almost casual exercise of powers beyond the natural. When they discovered the shrivelled up fig tree in the account above they were not just surprised but in astonished disbelief with misunderstanding. This became a moment for Jesus to instruct and encourage them again.

The part that jumps out at me in this new translation is how Jesus calls on them to have faith in even the smallest and seemingly most mundane details in life. As another translation expresses it: "And Jesus, replying, said to them: 'Have faith in God constantly.' " (Amplified Bible)

Elsewhere we read that we are to have faith in things both great and small. (Parable of the talents) As we strive this Lenten season to learn how to walk more faithfully with Christ each day, this is a good reminder that we are not just to turn to him in the times of large concerns but to share even the most routine times with him, constantly aware that we are gifted by His indwelling Holy Spirit.

Father help us to be more aware and trusting of your loving presence each day and indeed in every moment. Amen.

(Rev.) John McGurrin