

Lenten Devotional April 11, 2022

Scripture

Mark 11:12-25

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.

15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; 16 and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." 18 And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. 19 And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city. 20 In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. 21 Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." 22 Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. 24 So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

25 "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."

Devotional

The Rev. Alice Phillips '94

Today's passage relates to the greatest lesson I learned at PTS.

I was in Doug Hare's Greek Exegesis class. We were never to call him Dr. Hare; it was Doug. During that particular week, a student group was hosting the Rev. Don Bartow. Don was a friend of mine, and he and his wife were both on campus. I was transporting them to various places and making sure they were fed each day. Needless to say, something had to go . . . which was my Greek homework. On this particular day in class, I "passed" twice. Doug always let students pass when they did not know the answer to a homework question, but it was unusual for a student to pass on two questions in a row. After I passed the second time, Doug asked me how many times I was going to pass. My face obviously showed embarrassment and hurt. With hesitation, I said I also had to leave early as I was responsible for chapel that day.

At the end of the chapel service, I was holding the tray of the remaining communion cups as I began to clean up the chapel. Doug walked up to me and said he realized he was a little sharp with me in class and could tell by my face that my feelings had been hurt. He said it was obvious I had been quite busy that week. Then he asked me if I would forgive him.

That moment has been etched in my mind ever since. Doug taught me the greatest lesson I ever learned in seminary. It wasn't about Greek. It wasn't from a lecture. It didn't come from a class book. It came from the very best book of all: the Bible. You see, Doug had every right to be irritated with me that day in class. After all, I didn't have my homework done. He was a well-respected, well-seasoned professor, and I was just a student. I have never forgotten the example of humility that he showed me in asking for forgiveness. I will never forget what I was holding in my hand—the cup of forgiveness—Jesus' blood which was shed for each one of us. For Doug Hare, for me, and for you.

Almost 20 years later, and not long before his death, I had the wonderful opportunity to write a letter to Doug to remind him of that incident in chapel. He was grateful and moved. Forgiveness is powerful, and the impact lasts well beyond 20 years!

Today's Scripture passage tells us to forgive. If you have anything against anyone, forgive so that God in heaven may also forgive you.

Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for this season of Lent. It is a time to reflect upon the tremendous sacrifice your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, made for each one of us in his shed blood on the cross. Lord, we ask that you help us not just to remember and reflect, but also help us daily *to live* with a forgiving spirit toward those who have hurt us and to ask for forgiveness from those whom we have hurt. In Jesus' name. Amen.