

Week of February 26-March 3rd

*Today's devotional-writer is Mark Kiburz. Mark serves on our Board of Elders and is currently pursuing his ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God.*

### **THE CHALLENGE**

Scripture Reading: Read Mark Chapter 11

Challenge and password is used in the military to verify a person's authorization to enter into a secured area. The challenge is given by the soldiers in the secured area. The soldier trying to enter the secured area must give the password to enter. If the improper password or no password is given then the soldier is not allowed to enter.

Jesus, in Mark 11:12-14, curses a fig tree that did not produce fruit. The Gospel writer then takes us to Jesus throwing the money changers out of temple. He is filled with righteous anger. Jesus was not angry over a small matter. The money changers made the temple a "den of robbers" instead of a "house of Prayer for all nations." Jesus finishes the temple cleaning and you can see the contempt of the Jewish leadership, as they plot to kill Jesus. Why would they want Jesus killed? Money and power! The money produced in the temple was partially given to the Jewish leadership and they had power over people they did not want to relinquish. After the temple cleaning, Jesus and his disciples leave Jerusalem. The next day, the disciples observe the withered fig tree and are amazed. Jesus uses the event to teach about the importance of faith.

Mark, under the inspiration of the Spirit, also uses the fig tree to illustrate a point. By bracketing the cleansing of the temple with the cursing of the fig tree, Mark is able to illustrate how faithless and fruitless Israel was in failing to respond to Jesus' authority and ministry and how judgment was coming for their rejection of Jesus (this was fulfilled in AD 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans.)

When we enter God's house or God's kingdom, the challenge is given to enter for the right reasons. and the right way. Only the right password gets us in. The password is Jesus and the purpose is for God's glory. Without Jesus, we will be denied entry.

**Action Step: Enter God's house with a heart depending on Jesus, submitted to his authority.**

**Prayer Focus: Pray for faith from God to produce fruit in your life.**

**Take-a-way: Jesus is God's password. Fruit is God's purpose.**