***Jeremiah 3:16-25 16“Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days,” says the Lord, “that they will say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord.’ It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. 17“At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. 18“In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers. 19“But I said: ‘How can I put you among the children And give you a pleasant land, A beautiful heritage of the hosts of nations?’ “And I said: ‘You shall call Me, “My Father,” And not turn away from Me.’ 20Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,” says the Lord. 21A voice was heard on the desolate heights, Weeping and supplications of the children of Israel. For they have perverted their way; They have forgotten the Lord their God. 22“Return, you backsliding children, And I will heal your backslidings.” “Indeed we do come to You, For You are the Lord our God. 23Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, And from the multitude of mountains; Truly, in the Lord our God Is the salvation of Israel. 24For shame has devoured The labor of our fathers from our youth - Their flocks and their herds, Their sons and their daughters. 25We lie down in our shame, And our reproach covers us. For we have sinned against the Lord our God, We and our fathers, From our youth even to this day, And have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.***

Lord willing, we’ll finish Jeremiah 3 tonight. The judgement coming upon Judah is still in focus. Israel is in captivity, but Judah is called worse than Israel, worse than Sodom. She has seen what happened to Israel and continues to sin, believing that it cannot happen to her. After all, she’s very religious! Judah believes that it’s all about religion. God says – it’s all about relationship. We can have all kinds of religion and never have a relationship with God. Jesus says that, in the end, there will be many that come and say – we prophesied, we called on Your name – and He will say – depart from Me, I never knew you. We must know Jesus and be in relationship with Him.

Verse 16*“Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days,” says the Lord, “that they will say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord. It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore.* When we left Jeremiah in verse 15, he had referred to the coming kingdom of the Messiah, Jesus. This verse picks up. The people will be greatly multiplied. The Gentiles will now have access to God. The ark of the covenant is used to represent the rituals of the Jewish people. The sense here is that, when Jesus comes, all worship will fundamentally changes. The ark represented God among them. Now, God has come in the Person of Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. God is giving the Jewish people an assurance here that He will never leave them nor forsake them. The ark will no longer come to mind, it will not be a delight of the heart of the Jewish people any longer. When we have God incarnate walking among us, those things that represented Him are no longer thought about. Why look for a representation when the Real Thing is there? Of course, we know that the ark is lost to history. We also know that the animal sacrifices and religious acts in the Temple of Jerusalem have ceased. This verse is a flash forward into those times.

Verse 17*“At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts.* When Jesus comes back, Jerusalem will represent very Throne and His church, all believers. All nations will be gathered together to worship the One True God. They will all be drawn to the Name of Jesus. The desires of their hearts will no longer be selfish, but will conform to the Will of God. Corrupt thinking will be in the past. Jesus will make all things pure again, restoring what sin separated.

Verse 18*“In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers.*In the days of the Messiah, the second coming. Judah and Israel will be reunited. The enmity that they felt for one another will be set aside. They’ll walk with one another in obedience before God. This verse implies that there will be one Body, one Spirit in the church of Jesus Christ. Of course, Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul says just this - *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* One body with One Head, Jesus. Judah and Israel will come out of the north, meaning out of their captivity, into the land God gave. This may have been true in the time of the return to Jerusalem under Cyrus, in a limited way. His proclamation applied to all the Jewish peoples. But under Jesus, in the second coming, there will be One Shepherd. No silly controversies will divide, no genealogies will divide. We will be a house united under one Father.

Verse 19 ***“****But I said: ‘How can I put you among the children And give you a pleasant land, A beautiful heritage of the hosts of nations?’ “And I said: ‘You shall call Me, “My Father,” And not turn away from Me.’*Here, God is seen talking among the Godhead. But I said – Though this people are rebellious and disobedient, how will God put us into His divine plan? It appears inconsistent. God is perfect and holy. We are not. He is giving us unmerited favor. He is giving us an undeserved place in His good land. Through Jesus, God is giving Jew and Gentile alike a place in His beautiful heritage. To receive this, we need only believe and be reconciled to God, through Jesus His Son. We will call Him Father and we will never again turn away in disobedience.

Verse 20 - 21 *Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,” says the Lord. 21A voice was heard on the desolate heights, Weeping and supplications of the children of Israel. For they have perverted their way; They have forgotten the Lord their God.* ***Surely,****as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,” says the Lord. –* God likens Israel and Judah to an unfaithful wife dealing dishonestly and cruelly to her husband to the way that the Jewish people have dealt with Him. He has called for an end to the disobedience and sin. In the time to come, this behavior will no longer happen.  *A voice was heard on the desolate heights, Weeping and supplications of the children of Israel. For they have perverted their way; They have forgotten the Lord their God. –* Jeremiah is given knowledge from God that there will be some that truly repent, understanding how they have perverted their ways before God and crying out in heartfelt sorrow for the relationship they ruined. Some will recognize that they have forgotten God and turned from Him. This will cause them to weep. Have you ever wept over your wickedness before God, knowing how you have grieved the Holy Spirit and sinned against the God that loved you enough to give His Son?

Verse 22 *“Return, you backsliding children, And I will heal your backslidings.” “Indeed we do come to You, For You are the Lord our God.* God now opens a conversation with His people, offering healing and pardon for the sin, but they must return and seek God. People must repent and return to Him, as in the verse before, with weeping and supplication, fully understanding their powerlessness to save themselves. **Indeed**, we must answer quickly and wholeheartedly, cheerfully accepting the free gift. We understand what is offered and we come quickly and immediately to accept. For thou art the Lord our God! This verse and the verses that follow have the idea of accepting an invitation, knowing that it is given only at the good will of God, through Christ.

Verse 23 *Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, And from the multitude of mountains; Truly, in the Lord our God Is the salvation of Israel.* Remember that idols and false gods were worshipped in every hill and in every valley. The land was defiled. Vain was that hope, the people now see and admit. These were false hopes. The only real hope is hope in God. The Hebrew holds the idea that – surely the hills and mountains were liars and we have been mislead.

Verses 24-25 *For shame has devoured The labor of our fathers from our youth -   
Their flocks and their herds, Their sons and their daughters. 25We lie down in our shame, And our reproach covers us. For we have sinned against the Lord our God, We and our fathers, From our youth even to this day, And have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.*Shame has consumed all we worked for. It was not blessed by the Lord and has proven worthless. Our sin has brought calamity and disaster upon us. It is our fault. Flocks and herds, sons and daughters have been hauled away. Our sin has brought catastrophe. Our shame is so great, we cannot stand. Our confusion and reproach covers us. We have sinned and not obeyed the voice of the Lord. Therefore, we have reaped what we have sown. We are told in Galatians 6:7-8 tells us - *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.* As we sow, so shall we reap. Without Jesus, our sin will produce eternal death – we know the wages of sin is death. Through Jesus, we sow to the Spirit and will one day reap everlasting life.

And so we leave Jeremiah this evening as he gives us a glimpse into the future. He gives us a glimpse of the Hope to come. We, like the Jewish people, must see our sin. True repentance can only come when we see the hopelessness of our situation apart from Jesus. When we call on His name in belief with our whole hearts, He will save, sending the Holy Spirit, and changing us for eternity.