***Jeremiah 7:1-16 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2“Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!’ ” 3Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. 4Do not trust in these lying words, saying, ‘The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.’ 5“For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, 6if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, 7then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. 8“Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. 9Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, 10and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations’? 11Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,” says the Lord. 12“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. 13And now, because you have done all these works,” says the Lord, “and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer, 14therefore I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. 15And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren—the whole posterity of Ephraim. 16“Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you.***

Tonight, we’re back with Jeremiah, as he is instructed by God to take a different approach to proclaiming prophecy to the people. The year is widely agreed to be between 609 and 607 BC. These dates are aligned with the crisis of King Josiah dying. Judah is rocked by the death of their king. Jehoiakim will ascend to the throne. In the midst of this turmoil, God instructs Jeremiah to stand in the gate. It’s critical that, as God’s children, we stand in the gate and proclaim the Truth. Stand in the gate for children, grandchildren, friends, family, and all that may hear. Proclaim. God may yet relent, if we amend our ways and repent.

 Verses 1-2 *The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2“Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!’* Several sources suggest that this prophecy is taking place a year or more after the message of Jeremiah 6. God instructs Jeremiah to go and stand in the gate at Jerusalem. This was not unusual to have prophets standing in this gate and proclaiming to the people. The issue is what they were proclaiming. Jeremiah is calling for repentance and warning of calamity, while others are flattering the people and tickling their ears. These false prophets taught the people to ignore the truth, saying that God loved the Judah and honored Himself so much that He would never allow the people to be conquered or His temple to be profaned. Jeremiah is to stand in the East gate of the temple because this is the gate that leads directly to the Court of the People and the entrance of the Temple. He is to deliver a proclamation. Proclaim has the idea of saying from a place of authority. The Court of the People, or the Outer Court, was an area where almost all people were welcome. It was used for religious activities, but was not considered Holy like the inner courts, where the people really knew God. Jeremiah stands in this gate and delivers God’s word to the people. Those having ears will hear.

 Verse 3 *Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.* Jeremiah now proclaims the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord. Jeremiah delivers a message that John the Baptist will echo in the time of Jesus – Amend your ways and your doings. God is showing the people a great kindness, as He gives yet another chance for the people to return to Him. But they must change. People too often want the forgiveness of God, while they continue in the sin. It does not work that way. There must be a change. When the people amend their ways and doings, God promises to cause them to dwell in peace in Judah. Reformation or Ruin – it is their choice.

 Verse 4*Do not trust in these lying words, saying, ‘The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.* God is saying here, do not trust these lying words and place your faith and confidence in the Temple of the Lord. When God departs the Temple, it’s just a building. Likewise, when God departs a church building, it is no longer the church, but just a building. The Temple of the Lord is repeated three times. This was a common way to denote confidence or surety in ancient Judah. The people have a presumptuous confidence in the building, a pride in this place, while they continue ways and doings that dishonor the Lord of the Temple. God is saying – don’t trust in the building, but the Builder.

 Verses 5-7 *For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, 6if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, 7then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.* Now, Jeremiah gives specific amendments of doings and ways God expects. First, we have to note the word thoroughly. God expects thorough repentance, thorough change, no half efforts. My father used to tell me that a half effort amounted to no effort. He’d say – you’re either all in or not in at all. The specific things God expects to be amended: God expects thorough, complete honesty in all dealings – thoroughly execute judgement between man and his neighbor, they must not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow. They must not shed innocent blood in any of the land. Further, they must not worship false gods. When they amend their ways thoroughly, God will cause them to dwell in the land of their fathers. This would not have been new to the Jewish people hearing Jeremiah – In Deuteronomy 14, Moses gives a very similar charge. The people are being told to amend to the old ways, as we talked about last week

 Verses 8-11 *Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. 9Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, 10and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations’? 11Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,” says the Lord.* God now returns to the lies uttered by the false prophets, as in verse 4. All of these are breaches of the moral law of God – stealing, murder, adultery, lying, serving idols, having other gods before God. The people are violating the Ten Commandments, and ignoring the moral commandments of God. The rituals they may keep, but true worship they don’t have. Will the people be immoral before God and still come before Him. Will they be reprobate in their ways and doings and claim to be protected and delivered by the God they just dishonored. That makes no sense and it is foolishness to trust such lies. We cannot insult God, sin against God, and then stand in His house and claim to love God. It’s like the people are saying – we are delivered or free to do all the abominations we wish. *Has this house become a den of thieves –* Matthew 21:13 we hear Jesus, as He drove the sellers and the money changers from the Temple - *And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.* God’s house is to be reverenced. It’s not a place for the world, but a place to be in the presence of the Living Word of God. God finishes - *Behold, I, even I, have seen it –* God is not mocked, He is not fooled, He sees. He is not deceived.

 Verse 12 *“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.* Shiloh was the site of the Tabernacle of God when the children of Israel first entered the land of Canaan. Even in the days of Samuel, Shiloh was still where the ark and the Tabernacle stayed. Shiloh lays in ruin after Assyria conquered Israel and took the people captive. The people of Judah still have the opportunity to go and look upon that ruin, if they need proof of what God has allowed for the wickedness of the people. God did not spare Shiloh. He will not spare Jerusalem.

 Verses 13 *And now, because you have done all these works,” says the Lord, “and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer.* God refers to these works that we read back in verse 9. The people have been more evil than Israel, has been more wicked than Sodom. Because of this, because God rose early, was diligent through many, many prophets, warning. This has the idea that He has gone way above and beyond to call the people to repentance, but the people have refused to hear. He’s used so many different approaches and the people have refused to answer. We see the Therefore in the next verse.

 Verse 14 T*herefore I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.* The people have been obstinate. Because they have rejected all the warnings, God will do to the Temple as He did to Shiloh. Complete ruin is on its way.

Verse 15 *And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren—the whole posterity of Ephraim.* I will cast you out of My sight. Not much more needs to be said about that. Israel is their brethren. The whole posterity of Ephraim – which refers to the ten tribes of Israel. As Israel was taken into captivity by Assyria, so Judah will be taken by Babylon. As Shiloh fell to ruin, so Jerusalem will fall to ruin.

Verse 16 *Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you.* God, now speaking to Jeremiah, will allow no more intercession for these people. Thoroughly amending their doings and their ways is the only acceptable form of repentance now. The people must reform completely. But God knows that they will not take these steps. God will spare a remnant, but He will no longer suffer the abominations.

And so we leave Jeremiah tonight. The people have fully immersed themselves in moral depravity. While God rose early to warn, the people rose early to sin. They’ve ignored the lesson of Israel, believing themselves immune to judgement. History tells us that the people did not repent, did not amend their ways and doings, and were conquered by Babylon. May we learn, turn from our sin, and pursue Jesus with all our hearts. Let us not use Jesus as a license to sin, but as our eternal standard leading us away from sin.