***Jeremiah 11:12-23 Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they offer incense, but they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble. 13For according to the number of your cities were your gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem you have set up altars to that shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal. 14“So do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble. 15“What has My beloved to do in My house, Having done lewd deeds with many? And the holy flesh has passed from you. When you do evil, then you rejoice. 16The Lord called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit. With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, And its branches are broken. 17“For the Lord of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced doom against you for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke Me to anger in offering incense to Baal.” 18Now the Lord gave me knowledge of it, and I know it; for You showed me their doings. 19But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more.” 20But, O Lord of hosts, You who judge righteously, Testing the mind and the heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them, For to You I have revealed my cause. 21“Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life, saying, ‘Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, lest you die by our hand’— 22therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; 23and there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring catastrophe on the men of Anathoth, even the year of their punishment.’***

We’re back with Jeremiah this evening. We recall that God is bringing judgement on Judah. The people have deserted the covenant, even after they reaffirmed it under King Josiah. They have been serving false gods and idols, while praising God with their lips. Outwardly, some were keeping up appearances, but inwardly their hearts were far from God. In our last evening study together, we learned that God had exhorted the people to obey, so He might withhold His judgement, but they would not obey or even incline their ear to Him. He knows that there will come a time when they cry out, but He will not listen. We must seek the Lord God while He might be found.

Verses 12-14*Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they offer incense, but they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble. 13For according to the number of your cities were your gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem you have set up altars to that shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal. 14“So do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble.* Picking up from verse 11 in our last evening service, God highlights that the people will realize that they have forsaken God and that they are not heard, so what will they do? Cry out and repent and entreat God to have mercy? No. They cry out to the false gods. These gods are deaf and dumb, inanimate objects. They won’t save because they can’t save. We find an example of this in 2 Chronicles 28, when king Ahaz sacrificed to the Syrian gods after his military defeat. In Judah, every city had its own gods – as many cities as there were, so were the number of gods found there. Altars to these gods were found on every road and this was shameful. The people were disobedient, and this shame devoured the wealth of the nation, as we learned in Jeremiah 3:24. So do not pray for this people, Jeremiah. This is similar to what God had told Jeremiah in chapter 7, verse 16. Romans 1:28, referring to the sinful and debased ways of today says – *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate (debased) mind, to do those things which are not fitting*. God does not turn a blind eye to sin. He sees and He acts. He’s long suffering… but not forever.

Verse 15*“What has My beloved to do in My house, Having done lewd deeds with many? And the holy flesh has passed from you. When you do evil, then you rejoice.* God calls the Jews His own peculiar people. His possession. These same people sin and yet come to His house and call themselves His people, when they have disowned and disavowed God. They are engaging in lewd, disgraceful deeds with the nations around them. Romans 11:18 reminds *- it is not the branches that produce the root, but the Root that produces the branches*. Judah has cast off the Root. And the holy flesh has passed – meaning the sacrifices profit the people nothing because of their disobedience. The people are doing evil and rejoicing. They offend a Perfect God and celebrate their wickedness and offense.

Verse 16 *The Lord called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit. With the noise of a great tumult, He has kindled fire on it, And its branches are broken.* God once called His people a Green Olive Tree, meaning vivid and flourishing, fruitful in holiness and righteousness, lovely and good fruit. God once found them pleasant to the eye, as they were yielding righteous fruit in abundance. But not now. He has kindled a fire, representing the Chaldean Army and the noise and confusion to come as they invade the land. The fire will burn, and the branches will be consumed. The branches represent, in particular, the priests and the princes of the nation. None of the wicked will remain.

Verse 17*“For the Lord of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced doom against you for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke Me to anger in offering incense to Baal.”* The Lord planted this Green Olive Tree, and now He is taking action against this same tree that is bearing bad fruit. His reason for planting was to receive the good fruit. Now He pronounces judgement on the nation and will execute judgement. The evil for both the house of Israel and the house of Judah will be punished. Recall with me though that the people of Judah would be shocked to be grouped into the same judgement with Israel. They considered themselves righteous and Israel evil, but we remember that God sees Judah as more unrighteous and more wicked than Israel.

Verse 18-19 *Now the Lord gave me knowledge of it, and I know it; for You showed me their doings. 19But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more.”* Jeremiah now picks up referring to the conspiracy against him by the men of Anathoth. God revealed that there were people conspiring against him in his own hometown. God showed him their doings. But he had been like a gentle lamb, naïve to the dangers. Had God not revealed the conspiracy against him, Jeremiah would have been like a lamb slaughtered. Of course, we can’t read this and not think of Jesus being led as a sheep to the slaughter, gentle and lowly, being sacrificed for sin. Some theologians believe that this was a foreshadowing by Jeremiah of how the Christ would be conspired against. Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, meaning let us destroy this prophet Jeremiah and, in destroying him, we will also destroy his message to us.

Verse 20 *But, O Lord of hosts, You who judge righteously, Testing the mind and the heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them, For to You I have revealed my cause.* Jeremiah now turns these men and the evil they plot over to God for Him to deal with. It is not up to us to avenge. We plead our case to God and let Him deal righteously and justly. He always judges rightly. He tries the mind and the heart and understands all of the motivations. He discerns perfectly. Jeremiah prays that God will do justice between him and the people seeking to harm him. Jeremiah has revealed his cause to the Lord and the Hebrew carries a sense not so much as a question of Jeremiah seeing the vengeance, but an assurance that he will see the vengeance.

Verse 21*“Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life, saying, ‘Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, lest you die by our hand’* God reveals that He has seen clearly what these men of Anathoth have been saying. They are upset that Jeremiah is prophesying judgement. Had he told them everything would be peace and prosperity, they would not be seeking his life. But God sees that they are upset because they don’t agree with God’s message or His messenger. Therefore, they have hatched a conspiracy against the messenger, kill the messenger, rather than hear and heed the message from God.

Verse 22-23 *therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; 23and there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring catastrophe on the men of Anathoth, even the year of their punishment.’* God now says – therefore I will punish them. The Hebrew literally means – I will visit them and visit upon them judgement. The young men, who are priests and not men of war, will die by the sword. They will not be protected because of their office or position. Their sons and daughters will die by famine. Of course, we know that the Babylonians brought both. Nothing will remain of the families of the men that plotted against Jeremiah. Their bloodline will be utterly destroyed. I will bring the catastrophe all at once, in the same time that I visit and punish them. The process will not be long and drawn out, but quick and Jeremiah will see this happening.

And so we close this chapter still anticipating the Babylonians and Chaldeans arrival. The people of Judah and Jerusalem are in sin. They are no longer listening, and they are turning to false gods for their rescue. Punishment is coming. The message may be unwelcome, but the messenger is protected by God. God still protects His people and looks after those spreading His word. In the end, Jeremiah will live to see the prophecies come to be, while those plotting against him will die in the very judgement that they hated Jeremiah for prophesying. God looks after His own. It was true then and it is true now. Praise God.