***Jeremiah 9:1-12 Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people! 2Oh, that I had in the wilderness A lodging place for travelers; That I might leave my people, And go from them!
For they are all adulterers, An assembly of treacherous men. 3“And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me,” says the Lord. 4“Everyone take heed to his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; For every brother will utterly supplant, And every neighbor will walk with slanderers. 5Everyone will deceive his neighbor, And will not speak the truth; They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves to commit iniquity. 6Your dwelling place is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me,” says the Lord. 7Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: “Behold, I will refine them and try them; For how shall I deal with the daughter of My people? 8Their tongue is an arrow shot out; It speaks deceit; One speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, But in his heart he lies in wait. 9Shall I not punish them for these things?” says the Lord. “Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?” 10I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains, And for the dwelling places of the wilderness a lamentation, Because they are burned up, So that no one can pass through; Nor can men hear the voice of the cattle. Both the birds of the heavens and the beasts have fled; They are gone. 11“I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a den of jackals. I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.” 12Who is the wise man who may understand this? And who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord has spoken, that he may declare it? Why does the land perish and burn up like a wilderness, so that no one can pass through***

***For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.”***

We’re with Jeremiah tonight. Theologians widely agree that Jeremiah 9 was written as little as one year before the Chaldeans and the Babylonians took Jerusalem. The smaller cities of Judah have been falling as the Babylonians advanced, yet the people of Jerusalem still believe that God will not allow them to be taken. They believe that He will protect them to protect His Name and His Temple. They’ve ruined the relationship with God, falsely claiming to be His people, but they claim innocence, as we saw last week. God has been clear – they are wicked. They go through religious ritual, saying all the right things, but their heart is far from God. Into this situation, we step with Jeremiah again tonight.

 Verse 1 *Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!* Similar to what we read in Jeremiah 8:21, Jeremiah has a burden for these people and the calamities that are overtaking Jerusalem. He uses the symbolism of waters and fountains to communicate his sorrow and again tries to communicate the misfortune that is coming, hoping that the people will yet humble themselves to God and repent. Jeremiah would weep for what he has seen in the vision that will soon befall his fellow Jews. Jeremiah knows that many will fall by the sword and by famine. He weeps for the daughters and the sons of Judah, yet the people refuse to repent.

 Verse 2 *Oh, that I had in the wilderness A lodging place for travelers; That I might leave my people, And go from them! For they are all adulterers, An assembly of treacherous men.* It was common during that time that lodges or shelters were built in the desert or the mountains so that travelers had a place to overnight. They were usually sparse and not built for comfort. Jeremiah wishes he had such a place, lamenting that he’d rather pass his time in a remote and uncomfortable place than stay in Jerusalem and be with the wicked. He didn’t want to go because of the way they’d treated him, though they treated him very poorly. Instead, his soul suffered. As he served and worshipped God, the wicked sinned greatly. To see this sin and know the lives his countrymen were living caused him to despair and become weary of life. To see people dishonoring God is always wearisome to the lover of God. Add to that that Jeremiah knew that the people were destroying themselves, much as we see the destruction coming for the wicked today and it all becomes very heavy on the soul. Our delight is in God. We want to delight in Him in His church, but we’ll delight in Him in the wilderness if needed – regardless, we will delight in Him. Jeremiah calls the people adulterers because they disavowed God and served false gods, cheating on the relationship He has been faithful to. They have become apostate and turned from God. Of course, we know that there was apostacy then and 2 Thess 2:3 tells us it will happen again, *Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.* Jeremiah is weary of the falling away. We are too.

Verse 3*“And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me,” says the Lord.* The wicked are crafty and learn how to bend their tongues for lying like a bow bends to shoot arrows. Psalm 64:2-3 uses similar language - *Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,
From the rebellion of the workers of iniquity, 3 Who sharpen their tongue like a sword, And bend their bows to shoot their arrows—bitter words,* They are not valiant for the truth of God, but bend their tongues for lies. They lack the courage to stand for justice and honesty. Truth is suffering and no one seeks to help. Isaiah 59:14-15 says - *Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, And equity cannot enter. 15 So truth fails, And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.* Jeremiah observes that they proceed for evil to evil, one sin to another, growing more bold in their sin every day. The government is going along with them and there is no punishment. Each evil act is soon topped by a more evil act. And they do not know Me – God points out that, in the absence of the Truth of God, evil rushes in to fill the void.

Verses 4-6 *“Everyone take heed to his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; For every brother will utterly supplant, And every neighbor will walk with slanderers. 5Everyone will deceive his neighbor, And will not speak the truth; They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves to commit iniquity. 6Your dwelling place is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me,” says the Lord.* The lack of truth and knowledge of God now comes to its next logical conclusion. Neighbor and friend are not to be trusted. There is no trust to be found. Every brother will supplant – deceive and take advantage of – every other person, including family and friends. Friends and neighbors will walk as slanderers, telling lies on one another. Falsehoods and lies will be told with no fear of retribution and no shame or guilt. The people are so committed to the lies and dishonesty that they’ll do it even when it takes a lot of work and the truth would be easier. God now speaks to Jeremiah - Your dwelling place or habitation is surrounded by the wicked, all addicted to telling the lies and living in falsehood. To be a friend of the world and the wickedness of the world is to be an enemy of God. The world and the spirit are at odds to one another. The people refuse to know God because this interferes with their desire to do evil.

Verses 7-8 *Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: “Behold, I will refine them and try them; For how shall I deal with the daughter of My people? 8Their tongue is an arrow shot out; It speaks deceit; One speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, But in his heart he lies in wait.* God, still speaking to Jeremiah, now says – I will cast them into a furnace, a refiners fire. This will be a fire of affliction and I will purify them, taking out the impurities. How else will God remove the iniquity from the people? He’s called for repentance and reform to no effect. Fire is what is left. Their tongue is an arrow. Before it was a bent bow, back in verse 3. Here it is an arrow, putting into execution the plotting and mischief planned. The people speak deceit, saying what they do not mean. The people speak peaceably to their brother and neighbors and lie in wait to destroy them. There is no integrity left.

Verse 9 *Shall I not punish them for these things?” says the Lord. “Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?”* This warning is almost identical to the warning given in Jeremiah 5 – verses 9 and 29. *Shall I not punish them for these things?” says the Lord.
“And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?*  This is an emphasis to the warning – God will punish and He will avenge.

Verses 10-11 *I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains, And for the dwelling places of the wilderness a lamentation, Because they are burned up, So that no one can pass through; Nor can men hear the voice of the cattle. Both the birds of the heavens and the beasts have fled; They are gone. 11“I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a den of jackals. I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.”* Jeremiah is now doing as God instructs. He takes up weeping and wailing for the mountains and a lamentation for the wilderness. They are desolate. No travelers come. No birds or beasts, no cattle is heard. This is a picture of complete desolation and destruction. God says – I will make Jerusalem as heap – which has the idea of a heap of rubbish. I will make it a den of jackals or dragons – it can also be translated serpents. These are animals found in ruins and deserted places, uninhabited by people.

Verse 12 *Who is the wise man who may understand this? And who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord has spoken, that he may declare it? Why does the land perish and burn up like a wilderness, so that no one can pass through?* Is there no wise man acquainted with the will of God and His ways that can explain this and help the people understand? Who will be wise and declare the reasons for this calamity and ruin? Who will speak the true reasons for God’s anger? God’s question implies that few if any wise men remain. The priests no write off the calamities to chance and bad luck, instead of divine judgement. They do not see God’s hand at work in what is going on around them. I’d say – neither do so many in our nation today.

And so we leave Jeremiah tonight, weeping for the coming calamities, wailing for the people he know will fall by the sword, lamenting the judgement to come. The Chaldeans and the Babylonians are near. As we recall, young people like Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego will be taken away. Jerusalem will be left in ruins. Jeremiah has seen this all in a vision so real it’s as though he has already lived it. May we continue to pursue the truth of God and spread the Gospel to as many as possible, even in this time of lies and wickedness we’re seeing. We may not be able to reach everyone, but we may reach someone. And for that someone, our efforts will be eternally important.