***Jeremiah 14:1-12 The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the droughts. 2“Judah mourns, And her gates languish; They mourn for the land, And the cry of Jerusalem has gone up. 3Their nobles have sent their lads for water; They went to the cisterns and found no water. They returned with their vessels empty; They were ashamed and confounded And covered their heads. 4Because the ground is parched, For there was no rain in the land, The plowmen were ashamed; They covered their heads. 5Yes, the deer also gave birth in the field,
But left because there was no grass. 6And the wild donkeys stood in the desolate heights;
They sniffed at the wind like jackals; Their eyes failed because there was no grass.” 7O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, Do it for Your name’s sake; For our backslidings are many, We have sinned against You. 8O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, Why should You be like a stranger in the land, And like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night? 9Why should You be like a man astonished, Like a mighty one who cannot save? Yet You, O Lord, are in our midst, And we are called by Your name; Do not leave us! 10Thus says the Lord to this people: “Thus they have loved to wander; They have not restrained their feet.
Therefore the Lord does not accept them; He will remember their iniquity now, And punish their sins.” 11Then the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for this people, for their good. 12When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.”***

We join Jeremiah tonight as droughts plague the land of Judah. This is part of God’s judgement on the land. Time and again, we see God using natural phenomenon such as droughts and insects, floods and animals to bring judgement on rebellious nations, including Israel and Judah. We have no doubt that, if God did it then, He will do it now. This leaves Jeremiah heartbroken.

Verse 1 *The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the droughts.* The word of the Lord now comes to Jeremiah concerning the fact that sky has been shut up as we see with Moses in Deuteronomy 11:17, Elijah in 1 Kings 17, and Solomon in 1 Kings 7. Droughts were and are calamities. They impact the food supply, the animals, and of course the availability of water to drink. This may be the same drought talked about back in Jeremiah 3:3 when it is said that the showers were withheld, or it may be a different drought. Regardless, this is part of God’s punishment for sin. God uses nature to bring judgement upon nations.

Verse 2 *“Judah mourns, And her gates languish; They mourn for the land, And the cry of Jerusalem has gone up.* Judah mourns. This needs to be understood as both Judah and Jerusalem. The Hebrew has the idea of a mother mourning for her children, mourning over miseries that she sees them enduring. Her gates languish, meaning that this is the main topic of conversation in the public gates. This carries the idea that the public, everyone, is suffering in the drought. It is a dark time and the cry of the city goes up to heaven. Though they cry for their situation, it does not appear that they cry in repentance or confession. They want God to fix it, but have no intention of turning from their sin. True then and true now.

Verse 3-6 *Their nobles have sent their lads for water; They went to the cisterns and found no water. They returned with their vessels empty; They were ashamed and confounded And covered their heads. 4Because the ground is parched, For there was no rain in the land, The plowmen were ashamed; They covered their heads. 5Yes, the deer also gave birth in the field,
But left because there was no grass. 6And the wild donkeys stood in the desolate heights; They sniffed at the wind like jackals; Their eyes failed because there was no grass.”* The scarcity of water afflicted everyone, rich (nobles) and poor. Those high in society sent their servants to the cisterns, where water is captured and stored. They returned empty handed, ashamed, as there is no water to be found. Not only are they ashamed, but they are also frustrated. We know that Jerusalem is supplied by an upper pool and a lower pool. We know that there is an extensive underground system that is designed to bring water into the city. The ground is parched or chapped. The plowmen and the husbandmen are ashamed that they cannot get their crops to grow. They cover their heads, which is an ancient custom showing great mourning and great shame. The deer or the hind have their young, but the drought is so bad that they have no grass to eat and, as a result, they have no milk for their young; therefore, they desert their young in the field and leave them to seek grass to eat. This leaves them vulnerable to wild predators. This is communicating the level of desperation in the land. The wild donkeys stood on the high places and sniffed for water on the air. Being up higher gave them a better view and also the currents of the air were stronger. But their eyes failed. They found neither food nor water and languished as a result.

Verse 7 *O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, Do it for Your name’s sake; For our backslidings are many, We have sinned against You.* Jeremiah now tries to intercede for the people with God. He confesses their sin and asks God, the only One that can remove this drought and the judgement, to do just that. He acknowledges that they are backslidden, and they have sinned against God. They don’t deserve God’s mercy, but Jeremiah seeks it anyway. Jeremiah recognizes that God is righteous, and they are not, that they deserve the judgement that is coming upon them. God has every reason and right to bring His wrath upon the people, but Jeremiah asks for relief… not because of who the people are but because of Who God is. Do it for Your name’s sake. Jeremiah asks God to rescue them for His own honor and glory.

Verses 8-9 *O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, Why should You be like a stranger in the land, And like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night? 9Why should You be like a man astonished, Like a mighty one who cannot save? Yet You, O Lord, are in our midst, And we are called by Your name; Do not leave us!* Jeremiah now adds to his prayer, calling God the Hope of Israel. He is the only Hope Judah has. He has proven Himself trustworthy many times over hundreds of years and has been Israel’s Savior in time of trouble. Why should You be as a stranger or a traveler that has no permanent interest or investment in the land? You are our Hope and You have given us this land! Why should You be as a man astonished or surprised and unable to help because of his great confusion. Unlike a mighty man taken by surprise is unable to save and is left not knowing what to do, Jeremiah now makes a bold declaration - God is in our midst! We are Yours O Lord! Do not leave us.

Verse 10-12 *Thus says the Lord to this people: “Thus they have loved to wander; They have not restrained their feet. Therefore the Lord does not accept them; He will remember their iniquity now, And punish their sins.” 11Then the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for this people, for their good. 12When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.”* Now, God answers Jeremiah. They have loved to wander and they have loved to hurry to worship their idols – they have not restrained their feet. They’ve run after strangers and strange lands, with strange gods. Though they have had many prophets come to them, they have persisted in their sin. Therefore, the Lord does not accept them. God will not accept the prayers. His punishment will stand. Then, God tells Jeremiah – Do not pray for this people for their good. When the people hold a public fast, such as a fast for this drought they are enduring, God will not acknowledge or accept the fast. He will not relent. He will consume them with sword, famine, and pestilence. The drought is just the first of the woes. God will add even more as His judgement falls.

And so we leave Jeremiah tonight, interceding, praying on behalf of the people. Praying on behalf of a people who have not only rejected God, but have rejected Jeremiah. He is hated, despised, and rejected, yet he continues to come and pray on behalf of the people. And so we continue to pray on behalf of our nation, even on behalf of those that despise us, hate us, and reject us. Our hope is in Jesus and that He will turn this nation back to Him before it is everlasting too late. Our Hope is that He will save in this time of dark and trouble.