***Jeremiah 16:1-21 The word of the Lord also came to me, saying, 2“You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place.” 3For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them and their fathers who begot them in this land: 4“They shall die gruesome deaths; they shall not be lamented nor shall they be buried, but they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, and their corpses shall be meat for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth.” 5For thus says the Lord: “Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people,” says the Lord, “lovingkindness and mercies. 6Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried; neither shall men lament for them, cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them. 7Nor shall men break bread in mourning for them, to comfort them for the dead; nor shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother. 8Also you shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink.” 9For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will cause to cease from this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. 10“And it shall be, when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, ‘Why has the Lord pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?’ 11then you shall say to them, ‘Because your fathers have forsaken Me,’ says the Lord; ‘they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. 12And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me. 13Therefore I will cast you out of this land into a land that you do not know, neither you nor your fathers; and there you shall serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favor.’ 14“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ 15but, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers. 16“Behold, I will send for many fishermen,” says the Lord, “and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. 17For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes. 18And first I will repay double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols.” 19O Lord, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction,
The Gentiles shall come to You From the ends of the earth and say, “Surely our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things.” 20Will a man make gods for himself,
Which are not gods? 21“Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might; And they shall know that My name is the Lord.***

We’re back with Jeremiah tonight. Last week, we left him with the reassurance that God knows his doubts and fears and restores His children, those who are called according to His purpose. Jeremiah is human just as we are… The Bible can be trusted – remember that, in many cases, the very person that an unflattering or sinful thing is written about is the person writing the book of the Bible. People don’t like to tell things that make them look bad. Yet, throughout the Bible, people tell the truth about themselves and that is one of the things that makes the Bible so very precious to me.

 Verses 1-4 *The word of the Lord also came to me, saying, 2“You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place.” 3For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them and their fathers who begot them in this land: 4“They shall die gruesome deaths; they shall not be lamented nor shall they be buried, but they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, and their corpses shall be meat for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth.”*God begins to speak with Jeremiah again. He forbids Jeremiah to marry. Neither was he to have sons or daughters. Fruitfulness was viewed in Judah as a blessing. Judah will soon see a time when sons and daughters will be a source of misery, as mothers and fathers watch them die or be taken into captivity. They shall die gruesome (meaning very sorrowful) deaths. Mothers and fathers hearts will break.

 Verses 5-6 *For thus says the Lord: “Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people,” says the Lord, “lovingkindness and mercies. 6Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried; neither shall men lament for them, cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them.*Though mothers and fathers will want to mourn, God says do not enter the house of mourning. Seek no comfort in this time. The dead are better off than the living because of the suffering ahead. The time of peace and prosperity for the Jewish people is over. Lovingkindness and mercies will be in short supply. Suffering will be in abundance. Both small and great shall die. The land that was called the land of the living, the land flowing with milk and honey, will soon be a land of death. The people will die in such and amount and so quickly that there will be neither time, nor enough people left to bury them all. This would be a true offense to the Jewish people left alive. Neither shall there be time to lament for the dead. People will be overcome with miseries of their own. Though Leviticus 19:28 forbids the cutting of the flesh, it seems that the people of Jeremiah’s time had adopted the pagan practice to show mourning. Shaving of the head God also forbids here as a show of mourning.

 Verse 7 *Nor shall men break bread in mourning for them, to comfort them for the dead; nor shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother.* This describes a similar meal as found in verse 5, but the historian Jerome highlighted that it was a practice in these days for the community to bring food to the family in their time of mourning, much as we do today. God tells Jeremiah that eating and feasting during the coming suffering will cease. I smiled when one of the theologians spoke of this as being a “lost, ancient custom meant to prevail upon the mourner to remember to eat and care for himself”. I thought – well, he’s never been to Caswell County I don’t reckon.

 Verses 8-9 *Also you shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink.” 9For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will cause to cease from this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.* God now forbids Jeremiah by saying – not only must you not go to the house of mourning, but you also must not go and sit with them in the house of feasting. The message God was sending through Jeremiah is a message of affliction. To go into a house of celebration would be in conflict with the providential message Jeremiah was crying in the street. God will send weeping, not joyful celebration. This will keep Jeremiah focused and humbly on task and on message. If he is celebrating, the people will take his message even less seriously. God reminds Jeremiah that soon He will take away the mirth and gladness, the joy of marrying and celebrating. God reassures Jeremiah that he will see this time with his own eyes.

 Verses 10-12 *“And it shall be, when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, ‘Why has the Lord pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?’ 11then you shall say to them, ‘Because your fathers have forsaken Me,’ says the Lord; ‘they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. 12And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me.* As we’ve seen in previous chapters, God now tells Jeremiah that the people will hypocritically claim innocence. What have we done to deserve this? This is common to almost all the prophets. The people’s hearts have grown callous and hard. They are deceived and no longer see their sin. They have slipped into a place of apostacy, completely deserting God. God gives Jeremiah the answer – They went after foreign gods, worshipped idols, and have not kept God’s Law. This punishment has to do with their fathers, but God assures them that they have done more perversely than their fathers. They are in no way innocent.

 Verse 13 *Therefore I will cast you out of this land into a land that you do not know, neither you nor your fathers; and there you shall serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favor.’* Since the Jewish people have worked so hard to serve foreign gods, God will now take the opportunity to worship Him away and the foreign gods will be in the same land that the people will be taken to. They will worship the false gods day and night. Moses told the people this would happen hundreds of years earlier in Deuteronomy 4 & 28.

 Verses 14-15 *“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ 15but, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.* Therefore, or the Hebrew has the sense of Nevertheless. It can also be understood as After this. So, this is a shift in conversation. This is looking towards a time of future hope and restoration. God’s favor and protection will be with a remnant during the captivity and the time will come when the people will return to the land God promised. Until now, the Jewish people spoke of the deliverance from Egypt. In the future, they will speak of their deliverance from Babylon. God is the Source of both of these great acts.

 Verses 16-18 *“Behold, I will send for many fishermen,” says the Lord, “and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. 17For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes. 18And first I will repay double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols.”* We now shift away again from the hope of future restoration to the coming calamities. Fishermen and hunters are the Chaldeans and the Babylonians. They will come seeking prey. They will seek the Jews even when they are hiding in the caves and crevices of the hills and mountains. They will be relentless. God has marked the sins of the people. They hide nothing from His eyes. His eyes are always upon us. I will recompense double, or the Hebrew has the idea of recompense abundantly. Because they have defiled the land with idolatry and sin. The idols are like carcasses, because they have no life in them.

 Verses 19-20 *O Lord, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction,
The Gentiles shall come to You From the ends of the earth and say, “Surely our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things.” 20Will a man make gods for himself,
Which are not gods?* Jeremiah now calls to God, his strength and fortress, his support and comfort, his protector and refuge. He recognizes that God is his place to flee this desolation. He is the only Source of deliverance. Jeremiah prophesies a time when the Gentiles will come to God. Of course we know this is through Jesus Christ. The Gentiles will acknowledge the worthlessness and lies of their false beliefs. They will realize the senselessness of making a god and then worshipping it. They will see how ignorant and foolish this is. The created cannot create it’s creator. These are no gods.

 Verse 21 *“Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might; And they shall know that My name is the Lord.* Therefore, or at this time, I, being God, will cause the Gentiles to know the Gospel of Jesus. They shall know the Name above all names, Jesus. They will understand God’s true Divinity and Identity.

 And so we leave Jeremiah tonight. The judgement is still coming, but there is short term hope with the promise of the remnant that will return to Jerusalem through Cyrus and long tern hope that comes when Jesus brings a great Light to the Gentiles. God is the God of Hope. He’s still the God of Hope today. Let us never take our eyes off that Hope, no matter how dark the days seem around us. God has a plan and, one day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord, Most High.