***Jeremiah 17 Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved, For You are my praise. 15Indeed they say to me, “Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now!” 16As for me, I have not hurried away from being a shepherd who follows You, Nor have I desired the woeful day; You know what came out of my lips; It was right there before You. 17Do not be a terror to me; You are my hope in the day of doom. 18Let them be ashamed who persecute me, But do not let me be put to shame; Let them be dismayed, But do not let me be dismayed. Bring on them the day of doom, And destroy them with double destruction! 19Thus the Lord said to me: “Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, by which the kings of Judah come in and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; 20and say to them, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. 21Thus says the Lord: “Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; 22nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. 23But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction. 24“And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully,” says the Lord, “to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work in it, 25then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever. 26And they shall come from the cities of Judah and from the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin and from the lowland, from the mountains and from the South, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, bringing sacrifices of praise to the house of the Lord.27“But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.”***

 Two weeks ago, we left Jeremiah as God drew a sharp contrast between those who choose to serve Him and those that choose to serve idols and the world. One group will be blessed while the other will be made ashamed. One group will gather around His throne and praise Him for eternity and the other shall be written in the Earth, forgotten, and forever separated from the love of God. Jesus Christ is the Way to the throne of God. We must choose Him to come to the Father. No one comes to the Father, but by Him.

 Verse 14 *Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved, For You are my praise.* Jeremiah now addresses God on his own behalf. This is a personal plea. He asks to be healed. We’re not sure what he is asking to be healed of – perhaps it is a physical ailment. Perhaps, this represents healing from the wounds that he has suffered at the hands of his critics. Perhaps this is healing from the reproach and hatred poured out on him. Or maybe it’s healing of a spiritual nature, knowing that he too has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Regardless, he seeks healing, this has the idea of begging for healing, from God, as he knows that only God has the power to heal him. Save me and I shall be saved. For You are my praise. You are my comfort from all troubles and all blessings flow from and through You. Jeremiah is giving glory and honor to the Lord for His excellent Greatness.

Verses15*Indeed they say to me, “Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now!”* Behold or Indeed – Jeremiah recounts to God that the people scoff at him. They denounce Jeremiah, as though Jeremiah is not speaking on God’s behalf, but by his own imagination. Where is the word of the Lord? They scoff as the men from 2 Peter 3-4, denying God’s imminent coming. Wicked people become hardened in heart and set in sin. They believe that God is asleep, or will not notice. They believe that the day of the Lord will never come. We’re seeing that today. It’s the way of people since time began. Let it come now – these scoffers now begin to dare the vengeance of God and challenge Jeremiah to bring down the wrath of God and execute the judgement he has prophesied. Of course, we know that God acts in His time, not ours. He will bring just judgement in the perfect time – neither early nor late.

Verse 16-18*As for me, I have not hurried away from being a shepherd who follows You, Nor have I desired the woeful day; You know what came out of my lips; It was right there before You. 17Do not be a terror to me; You are my hope in the day of doom. 18Let them be ashamed who persecute me, But do not let me be put to shame; Let them be dismayed, But do not let me be dismayed. Bring on them the day of doom, And destroy them with double destruction!* Jeremiah now reminds God that he did not seek the office of prophet, pastor, or shepherd. He didn’t seek it, but he has not hurried from it either. He’s faithfully executed. When God called, Jeremiah answered. Neither did he seek the prophecies and the woeful days that he is prophesying over Judah. He didn’t desire the woeful days that are coming, but he has been faithful to what God has spoken. He spoke only what God told him to and nothing more came from his lips. Then Jeremiah asks of God that he may find comfort, peace, and security in God, even as his adversaries gather. Do not be a terror to me. Forsake me not God. Let them be ashamed who persecute me, but don’t bring shame on me. Let them be dismayed or confounded, but don’t let me be confounded. Bring on them the day of doom, as You have promised. The truth of Jeremiah’s prophecies will play out very soon and he will be seen as the true prophet of God.

Verses 19-24 *Thus the Lord said to me: “Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, by which the kings of Judah come in and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; 20and say to them, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. 21Thus says the Lord: “Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; 22nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. 23But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction. 24“And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully,” says the Lord, “to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work in it,* We now hear Jeremiah give a prophecy that he has been commanded to give immediately. The Hebrew holds the sense of giving the prophecy immediately with no delay. Thus the Lord said to me. Stand in the gate most frequented by the people of Judah, being nearest to the palace in Jerusalem. This is the gate used by the king to hold court and deliver judgements. Stand in that gate and say – Jeremiah is to speak to both the highest and the lowest people of society, from prince to peasant. Take heed to yourselves or, as the Hebrew indicates, take heed to your souls. Now, Jeremiah starts to talk about the sanctity of the Sabbath. How we observe the Sabbath is an issue of the soul. How we set aside the day of the Lord reflects reverence of God. God commands that we honor the Sabbath and keep it Holy. Jeremiah gives no new commandment. Neither carry forth a burden nor do any work. Nehemiah spoke of this. Leviticus speaks of this. Do no work on this day, but rest and focus on God. Hallow the Sabbath day. It’s a token of God’s covenant with His people. Exodus 20:8-11, in the ten commandments, we find *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.* The Sabbath was peculiar to the Jewish people and was one of the things that distinguished them from other nations. God had commanded the forefathers of the Jews, but they have not obeyed, nor inclined their ear to God’s command. They made their necks stiff and defied the commands of God.

If the people will heed God and observe this command, Jeremiah moves into the blessing that God will give. Verses 25-26 *then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever. 26And they shall come from the cities of Judah and from the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin and from the lowland, from the mountains and from the South, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, bringing sacrifices of praise to the house of the Lord.* Then shall enter the gates of the city kings and princes. Through Jeremiah, God is opening yet another door for the people to repent, turn from the idols, and return to Him. This language suggests that the coming destruction and judgement is not irreversible. If the king and the princes listen to God through the prophecy of Jeremiah, the city will not be destroyed. It doesn’t say anything about how Judah will be positioned in the Babylonian empire, so we don’t know if it would stay independent or be a kingdom under tribute. Regardless, the king and princes will be descendants of David. From the land of Benjamin, lowlands, mountains, and South – all these designations are familiar to the king because they are the designations dividing the land in Joshua 15. Benjamin had become part of the land of Judah, being separate from the ten tribes of Israel. Bringing offerings, sacrifices, incense communicates that the people would hallow the Sabbath and sanctify their worship again. They must put away evil and idol worship. If they do these things, returning to God with their whole heart, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple will be preserved.

We just heard what would happen if the people heeded God’s word and returned. Now, in verse 27, we hear what will happen if they do not heed. *But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.”* God now pronounces a reverse promise. Again, hallowing the Sabbath day takes center stage. God will destroy the city with fire, including the Temple. The Temple will be burned down. He will remove the kings and princes. God will kindle the fire through the hands of the Chaldeans and the Babylonians. This fire will devour and not be quenched. In 586 BC, the Babylonians did indeed capture Jerusalem. Secular historians and archaeological digs confirm that the city was destroyed, and the Temple was burned. The destruction was utter and complete.

So we leave Jeremiah tonight. The judgement has been written with an iron pen. God gave the opportunity to avoid the destruction, but the people loved their sin. And so it is with people today. May we return to our first love Jesus and cry out for God to deliver our nation. God hears His faithful. He may yet turn away His wrath.