***Jeremiah 18:12-23 And they said, “That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart.” 13Therefore thus says the Lord: Ask now among the Gentiles, Who has heard such things? The virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing. 14Will a man leave the snow water of Lebanon, Which comes from the rock of the field? Will the cold flowing waters be forsaken for strange waters? 15“Because My people have forgotten Me, They have burned incense to worthless idols. And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways, From the ancient paths, To walk in pathways and not on a highway, 16To make their land desolate and a perpetual hissing; Everyone who passes by it will be astonished And shake his head. 17I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back and not the face In the day of their calamity.” 18Then they said, “Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come and let us attack him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.” 19Give heed to me, O Lord, And listen to the voice of those who contend with me! 20Shall evil be repaid for good? For they have dug a pit for my life. Remember that I stood before You To speak good for them, To turn away Your wrath from them. 21Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, And pour out their blood By the force of the sword; Let their wives become widows And bereaved of their children. Let their men be put to death, Their young men be slain By the sword in battle. 22Let a cry be heard from their houses, When You bring a troop suddenly upon them; For they have dug a pit to take me, And hidden snares for my feet. 23Yet, Lord, You know all their counsel Which is against me, to slay me. Provide no atonement for their iniquity, Nor blot out their sin from Your sight; But let them be overthrown before You. Deal thus with them In the time of Your anger.***

We’re back with Jeremiah tonight, as we remember that God has given him the analogy of a Potter and clay. Last week, we witnessed a potter reusing clay when the vessel being made has become marred and spoiled. We praise God that He does not discard us when we become marred or spoiled. Instead, He has a perfect plan and weaves our mars and imperfections into this plan that people might be reached and souls saved. But, as we saw last week, the men of Judah responded to God’s calls for redirection and repentance with conduct that demonstrated what their heart was saying – that is hopeless. Tonight, we will begin where we left off last week in verse 12.

*And they said, “That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart.”* The people of Judah respond to God’s graciousness, mercy, and long suffering - “That is hopeless!” They’re response has the idea that God is wasting His love on them. They will not change. He sends His servants in vain. The people decide to walk according to their hearts dictates, many according to their evil imaginations. Their conduct demonstrates that they consider all of this hopeless. The proof is in their walk not in their words. Jesus says in Matthew 7:16 - *You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?* While Jesus is speaking of false prophets, Christ’s followers are known by the fruit they bear.

Verse 13-14 *Therefore thus says the Lord: Ask now among the Gentiles, Who has heard such things? The virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing. 14Will a man leave the snow water of Lebanon, Which comes from the rock of the field? Will the cold flowing waters be forsaken for strange waters?* As now among the Gentiles or the heathen. God is saying that evil is so great in the nation of Judah that there will be no parallel in heathen nations. In Jeremiah 2, God said – check Kedar and Chittim, heathen nations for such wickedness and rebellion. Judah has rebelled to a level far beyond other idolatrous nations. The virgin of Israel, meaning God’s covenant people dedicated to Him, have treated Him horribly and pursued other gods. Would a man leave cool, fresh, free flowing water for stagnant cisterns? That seems like nonsense. Who would leave the fresh and clean for the stagnant and dirty? Likewise, it is ridiculous that people forsake the one True God in favor of lifeless idols. The goodness of God flows continuously and freely. All the people needed to do was to adhere to His commandments and seek forgiveness when they fail. Yet, they could not. Instead, they pursue the evil dictates of their own hearts.

Verses 15-17 *Because My people have forgotten Me, They have burned incense to worthless idols. And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways, From the ancient paths, To walk in pathways and not on a highway, 16To make their land desolate and a perpetual hissing; Everyone who passes by it will be astonished And shake his head. 17I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back and not the face  
In the day of their calamity.”* Because the people of God, Judah specifically here, have forgotten God. They have forgotten, thinking the idea of no remembrance at all, of all He has done for them and is doing for them. Instead, they choose to burn incense to idols. These creations of man’s imagination, literally the results of the evil dictates of their hearts. This worship is vain and causes the people to stumble. Remember in Jeremiah 6:16, God instructed us to stay in the old paths and ask after the old ways where good may be found. We are to remain in the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Wandering away leads to suffering and desolation. Though the men of Judah did not set out with the purpose of making their land desolate, this is what their conduct resulted in. Perpetual hissing in the time of Jeremiah was a deep insult and a sign of great scorn. God says – I will scatter them as an east wind. The east wind is a dry wind. This is a wind blowing off the Arabian Desert. This is the general direction Babylon will be coming from as they make war against Judah. God then finishes that He will show them the back and not the face. This has the idea that God will show the same aversion for Judah as Judah has long shown Him. God will favor them no more.

Verse 18 *Then they said, “Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come and let us attack him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.”* Having heard Jeremiah out, the men of Judah now say – Let us devise plans or devices against Jeremiah. This has the idea of accusing him of being a false prophet. We will accuse him because of his prophecies that contradict what the priests are saying. The priests are saying peace, peace, God will bless. Jeremiah is giving God’s Truth, which is that of judgement on the nation of Judah. The priests and those that consider themselves wise have been preaching that God will be perpetually good, no matter the sins of the people. Jeremiah rightly says – not true. Let us smite Jeremiah with our tongue. We will attack him and portray him to everyone as an enemy of the state and of God. Of course, they is the same today when people speak the Truth of Jesus. Many attack the person and seek to portray the Truth teller as mistaken or an outright liar. When Truth cannot be killed, people seek to confuse.

Verses 19-23 *Give heed to me, O Lord, And listen to the voice of those who contend with me! 20Shall evil be repaid for good? For they have dug a pit for my life. Remember that I stood before You To speak good for them, To turn away Your wrath from them. 21Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, And pour out their blood By the force of the sword; Let their wives become widows And bereaved of their children. Let their men be put to death, Their young men be slain By the sword in battle. 22Let a cry be heard from their houses, When You bring a troop suddenly upon them; For they have dug a pit to take me, And hidden snares for my feet. 23Yet, Lord, You know all their counsel Which is against me, to slay me. Provide no atonement for their iniquity, Nor blot out their sin from Your sight; But let them be overthrown before You. Deal thus with them In the time of Your anger.* Jeremiah now goes to God. Give heed to me O Lord. We find great comfort that God is an impartial Judge and He will determine between right and wrong perfectly. Jeremiah says – Hearken or listen to those contending with me – hear what they are saying. Shall evil be repaid for good? Shall evil go unpunished? Will You protect and avenge me O Lord? Jeremiah tells God that the people are digging a pit and laying snares for his soul. They are laying traps and designing devices to harm me. This has the idea of a secret conspiracy planned in a cowardly way. Jeremiah has stood before God and interceded for the very people now plotting his death. He has prayed for God to relent and forgive the very ones that hate him. Therefore, deliver up their children – in other words, God, I will not intercede for them any longer. Execute your judgements as you see fit in famine and sword. I will no longer intercede as the enemy advances – let a cry be heard from their houses. Jeremiah is not praying in an unholy way. He is not showing a zeal for sinners to be punished. Instead, Jeremiah understands that he is seen as a problem and not a blessing, so he stop praying for the people as God instructed him earlier. Jeremiah is simply saying – Your prophecies be executed God, as You have spoken, so let it be.

And so we leave Jeremiah tonight. He has been interceding on behalf of the people and they have been plotting his death. While he builds them up, they seek to tear him down. While he seeks their good, they seek his harm… because they love their sin more than they love their God. They seek to destroy anyone that stands between them and sin. But, we know that Jeremiah is protected by God. God will execute His judgement in His time. Likewise, we can rest assured that we hedged in by God as Christ’s followers. We offer intercessory prayers on behalf of others. God knows the timing of Christ’s coming. May we be zealous in our prayers for the lost that they may find Jesus while He may yet be found.