***Jeremiah 23:10-24 For the land is full of adulterers; For because of a curse the land mourns. The pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up. Their course of life is evil, And their might is not right. 11“For both prophet and priest are profane; Yes, in My house I have found their wickedness,” says the Lord. 12“Therefore their way shall be to them Like slippery ways; In the darkness they shall be driven on And fall in them; For I will bring disaster on them, The year of their punishment,” says the Lord. 13“And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria: They prophesied by Baal And caused My people Israel to err. 14Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: They commit adultery and walk in lies; They also strengthen the hands of evildoers, So that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, And her inhabitants like Gomorrah. 15“Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets: ‘Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, And make them drink the water of gall; For from the prophets of Jerusalem Profaneness has gone out into all the land.’ 16Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord. 17They continually say to those who despise Me, ‘The Lord has said, “You shall have peace” ’; And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, ‘No evil shall come upon you.’ ” 18For who has stood in the counsel of the Lord, And has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word and heard it?
19Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord has gone forth in fury - A violent whirlwind! It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. 20The anger of the Lord will not turn back Until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly. 21“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. 22But if they had stood in My counsel, And had caused My people to hear My words, Then they would have turned them from their evil way And from the evil of their doings. 23“Am I a God near at hand,” says the Lord, “And not a God afar off? 24Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?” says the Lord; “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the Lord.***

Two weeks ago, we left Jeremiah broken hearted for the land and the people that he saw all around him. We left him with a burden for the people, as we must have a burden for the lost we encounter. Christians do not stand on the mountain top high, looking down upon the lost souls wandering by. Instead, we stand in the highways and byways of life, calling to the people passing by, hoping to give someone the Gospel and lead him or her to Christ Jesus. This is why we are to remain humble, knowing that, without the Grace of Almighty God, Grace that I did not earn, we too would be lost and wandering. Jeremiah is broken hearted as he begins to speak again in verse 10.

Verse 10*For the land is full of adulterers; For because of a curse the land mourns. The pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up. Their course of life is evil, And their might is not right.* The land is full of adulterers, and this holds the idea of the adulterers inviting others to join in the sin of adultery as well. In fact, they are encouraging it. Recall that the civic and religious leaders have been highlighted as guilty, so this also holds the idea of an adulterous nation sinning against a Holy God and throwing off His Law and His Covenant to pursue false gods and idols. Because of the swearing of the land or the curse of the land. The land is cursed as, not only do the people swear falsely and bear false witness, not only do they promise and not deliver, but they are also taking God’s name in vain. Jeremiah may also be highlighting that people swore by an oath and did not tell the truth. My father used to tell me all the time – a lie of omission is still a lie. The people knew the truth and failed to tell the truth. When called to witness, the people gave an oath, instead of witnessing truthfully and faithfully. Therefore, the land is mourning – it is afflicted with calamities such as drought, pestilence, famine, and war. The pleasant places, meaning even the wilderness and less inhabited places, are dried up under the wrath of God. God’s judgement extends to all corners of the land. The prophets, priests, and pastors, as well as the people they have misled have followed an evil course of action. It is not a single act of evil, but a perpetual course of evil. This has corrupted the land and brought God’s wrath to bear.

Verses 11-12 *For both prophet and priest are profane; Yes, in My house I have found their wickedness,” says the Lord. 12“Therefore their way shall be to them Like slippery ways; In the darkness they shall be driven on And fall in them; For I will bring disaster on them, The year of their punishment,” says the Lord.* The prophets and priests are profane. They do not follow the ordinances of God, though this is what they are called to do. Instead, they teach false doctrine and corrupt worship. So much so that God finds wickedness and false doctrine even in His house, the temple. People come with the pretense of worship and to honor God, but then act contrary to the Law. Therefore, their way will be slippery. They will not walk in steadiness or success but will fail in all their plans and designs. God will not allow wickedness to dwell in His house, then or now.

Verses 13-14*“And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria: They prophesied by Baal And caused My people Israel to err. 14Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: They commit adultery and walk in lies; They also strengthen the hands of evildoers, So that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.* God has seen – first the folly and wickedness in the prophets of Samaria (meaning the Northern Kingdom of Israel), which He sent into captivity with the Assyrians. These prophets led the people to err and worship Baal and enticed them away from the One True God. Then in verse 14, God shifts focus to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He has seen a horrible thing, or the Hebrew holds the idea of a thing to be detested because it is an abomination to God. God pronounces the sin of Jerusalem and Judah worse than that of Samaria. They pronounced their false prophecies in the name of God. They greatly profaned and dishonored God’s name. They commit adultery and walk in lies. They have chased false idols and called the inventions of their mind’s visions. They prophesy falsely and with deceit. They then strengthen and support men in the evil that these men are doing and strengthen the hands of those engaging in wrong. They promise peace and security, when God is bringing calamity and war. They are all of them unto Me as Sodom and Gomorrah – They have exceeded the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. This would have been shocking for the people listening to Jeremiah to hear.

Verse 15 - *“Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets: ‘Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, And make them drink the water of gall; For from the prophets of Jerusalem Profaneness has gone out into all the land.’* God now pronounces judgement on the prophets and their wicked actions leading the people astray. Behold I will feed them with wormwood. They will drink the water of gall. This holds the idea of afflicting them with the most bitter of calamities. Hypocrisy and profaneness has gone out into all the land. God has seen that these prophets have put on false piousness, even as they acted wickedly. The people saw through their false fronts and started to indulge in like wickedness. People don’t do as they are told, but as they see. It was true then and it is true now.

 Verses 16-17*Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord. 17They continually say to those who despise Me, ‘The Lord has said, “You shall have peace”’; And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, ‘No evil shall come upon you.’* Do not listen to things that are contrary to the word of God, no matter who it is that is saying them. Too often we listen to false prophets who twist the word of God for their own gain. The prophets of Jeremiah’s day were prophesying worthless and vain words, deceiving the people. They were bringing a vain and false hope that the judgement of God was not imminent. We have some doing that today, saying that we need not turn back to God, but how could God possibly be pleased with the perversions He is seeing in our land and world today? He isn’t. The prophets were speaking vision of their own heart, and we know that the heart is desperately wicked and perverse. The vision is not of God. They reinforce the evil of those rebelling against God and despising Him. They prophesy peace when chaos is outside the gates. They prophesy abundance when destruction is coming. There will be no peace to the wicked. God will not condone sin.

Verse 18 *For who has stood in the counsel of the Lord, And has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word and heard it?* Jeremiah now echoes what Isaiah 55:8-9 teaches us about our God- *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord.* ***9****“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.* God’s ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. He reveals to whom He will. Every messenger of God must speak consistently with His Holy Word. Inconsistency with the Bible is errant teaching.

Verses 19-20 *Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord has gone forth in fury - A violent whirlwind! It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. 20The anger of the Lord will not turn back Until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly.* Behold, holding the idea of look! It is evident and imminent! A severe judgement has come. It will be sudden and destructive like a tornado or severe storm. It will be a great storm because it is of the Lord. This storm will fall grievously upon the head of the wicked, the prophets, priests, pastors, and leaders. The anger will not return until the purpose is accomplished. Just as the word of the Lord shall not return void. In the latter days, when it is too late to turn, you will know that this is the punishment for sin, the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecies. Hindsight is 20/20.

Verses 21-22 *“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. 22But if they had stood in My counsel, And had caused My people to hear My words, Then they would have turned them from their evil way And from the evil of their doings.*

God did not send these prophets, yet they were always ready to speak lies to the people on His behalf. They were not called. Many today are not called, but it’s a job, a family tradition. If these prophets had been kneeling in obedience to God, they would have spoken God’s truth – Repent and be saved! And not their own heart’s inventions. If they’d spoken God’s true prophecies, the people would have turned from evil and been saved. Likewise today, we must see sin for what it is and stop sugar coating spiritual rebellion with words like choice and living the best life now. These are concepts straight from the heart of Satan.Verses 23-24 *Am I a God near at hand,” says the Lord, “And not a God afar off? 24Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?” says the Lord; “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the Lord.* These false prophets imagine a God that is far off and not near at hand. Yet, we know God is close at hand. Psalm 139:7-9 King David says - *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?* ***8****If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.* ***9****If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,* God is not like the dumb idols that they worship, made with hands, unseeing, unhearing, and needing to be carried place to place. He is omniscient, omnipresent – everywhere, all the time. As King David said, so says Jeremiah – Can anyone hide himself in secret places? The answer is no. God is above all, through all, and in all. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

 And so, we leave Jeremiah tonight. The false prophets are prevalent. The people are deceived. The land is mourning, and the blessings of God are passing away. The Babylonians have been raised up and will soon carry Jerusalem away. Too late, the people will know that Jeremiah was crying out the bitter Truth while they were eating the honeycomb of lies from false prophets. We have the same issue today. People have itching ears, wanting sin to be condoned rather than called out. We want comfort rather than Christ, investing in the perishable rather than the Precious. May God forgive us and guide us to kneel in His presence and call out for the forgiveness and restoration of our nation before we find ourselves in the latter days, understanding all bitterly and perfectly with hindsight that is 20/20.