***Jeremiah 24 The Lord showed me, and there were two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord, after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. 2One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten, they were so bad. 3Then the Lord said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad.” 4Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 5“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for their own good, into the land of the Chaldeans. 6For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. 7Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart. 8‘And as the bad figs which cannot be eaten, they are so bad’ - surely thus says the Lord - ‘so will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, his princes, the residue of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt. 9I will deliver them to trouble into all the kingdoms of the earth, for their harm, to be a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse, in all places where I shall drive them. 10And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they are consumed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers.’***

When we were last with Jeremiah, he was comparing and contrasting false prophets having false visions and dreams versus true prophets having true visions and dreams. Remember that, at the time of Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Nahum, Ezekiel, and Daniel all were active. God was speaking through many. Jeremiah now has a vision of good figs and bad figs. As with the image of potter and clay, God uses imagery to bring understanding to the course Judah and Israel’s captivity will take.

Verse 1 says *The Lord showed me, and there were two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord, after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon.* Jeremiah starts out saying, The Lord showed me. This was probably a vision and relates to the dreams we talked about a couple of weeks ago. The vision has two baskets. In the temple, there were two baskets offered as first fruits to the Lord. It’s thought that these two baskets represent that offering. The people would have been very familiar with this offering. This vision is after Nebuchadnezzar carried Jeconiah away. 2 Kings 24:12 tells us this was in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzars’ reign. Nebuchadnezzar also carried away princes, craftsmen, and smiths. The Hebrew has the idea that these people were armor and weapons makers, which would make sense. This would prevent the Jews remaining from rearming themselves easily. It also provides skills useful for a warlike nation like Babylon. So these were metal workers, chain mail makers, and weapons makers.

Verse 2*One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten, they were so bad.* In Israel, there are three types of figs – Boccore, which mature in June. The second, Kermez, which ripen not before August. The third is a winter fig. The winter fig is likely the fig that Jesus looked for on the tree at the time of Passover around March. The figs Jeremiah sees here are likely Boccore, as Jeconiah was taken in March of 597 BC, so the Boccore would have been the next first fruit figs for offering. Jeremiah sees one basket that has very good figs, first ripe, and one basket that is very bad, that could not be eaten.

Verses 3-4 *Then the Lord said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad.” 4Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying.* The Lord asks Jeremiah what he sees, and Jeremiah responds very simply, verifying what is described in verse 2. Then the word of the Lord comes again.

Verses 5-7 *“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for their own good, into the land of the Chaldeans. 6For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. 7Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.* Thus says the Lord – God now explains this parable of the good and bad figs. The good figs represent many of the first captives in the 597 BC. This included Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, as well as Ezekiel. The captivity took them from the evil of Jerusalem and the later destruction to come in 587 BC. The calamities and destruction they witnessed, the pressures of the captivity, led them to faith and focus on God. God will favor these as the good figs and ripen them through repentance and return to Him. Though these have been carried away, God will show His favor and protection even in this strange land. God will set His eyes on the good for their good, regardless of affliction. Recall that Daniel and his friends found almost immediate favor in the eyes of their captors. God will bring some of them back from the captivity, which they would have been very old given the 70 years of captivity. God often uses uncomfortable and hard situations to draw us closer to Him. Comfort is the enemy of growth in Christ. God says – I will build them up and not pull them down. He will prosper them, provide for them. God will help them build houses, plant vineyards, and grow families, even in captivity. Daniel and his friends were elevated into positions of power. God conferred blessings on these first fruits, even in times of distress. They will be spiritually and materially blessed for setting their hearts on God. Their captivity will be for their good. God will give them a heart to know Him, as verse 7 says. They will understand His glory and who He is to them. They will know His truth and the faithful pursuit of the truth will free them from this physical captivity. God graciously allows us to become more and more acquainted and aware of Him as we grow in Him, through Jesus. One of the works of the Holy Spirit is to teach us about God, to remind us of the teachings of Jesus, the Truth. We should not let it be lost on us that God does not say He will give them a **mind** to know Him, but a **heart** to know Him. He will provide the spiritual grace to learn about Him, when we earnestly seek Him with our whole heart – Mark 12:30 says - *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment*. We receive our knowledge of God through the mercy of God and by His provision of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:12 says - *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.* God goes on - *And they shall be my people –* God will again make the Jews His own and He will be their God*. For they shall return unto me with their whole heart –* The good figs, the people that will be the returning remnant, will be completely changed in heart. Their affections and actions will be focused on God. Serving God will be their delight. There will be no lukewarm among them. They will pursue God, not just religion. They will truly KNOW God and SEEK Him! In John 4:23, Jesus tells us - *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.* Head knowledge is not enough. Heart knowledge is the only way to God through Jesus Christ.

Verse 8-10 *‘And as the bad figs which cannot be eaten, they are so bad’ - surely thus says the Lord - ‘so will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, his princes, the residue of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt. 9I will deliver them to trouble into all the kingdoms of the earth, for their harm, to be a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse, in all places where I shall drive them. 10And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they are consumed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers.* We looked at the good figs, ripe and ready to be first fruit for God. Now, we see the evil figs. *So will I give up Zedekiah –* These are people that were taken in the second diaspora to Babylon, or fled to Egypt in hopes of escaping, God will deliver these unto all kingdoms. These are those that have done wickedly, as Moses warned, and brought the curses upon Israel. The people claimed great love and reverence for God but behaved very wickedly. These people will become a curse wherever they go. They will become a reproach, as Daniel 9:16 says. *And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they are consumed –* God’s judgements will follow until all judgement is executed on the fathers and their descendants. They will not be able to hide, whether in Egypt, or wherever they try to hide. God knows and sees.

And so, we leave Jeremiah tonight. God has promised a remnant to return to Israel. We know this happened. The remnant was a small number of faithful compared to the many, many that claimed to be His people. Likewise, today, many claim faith in Jesus, but live as the world. God is faithful and there is a remnant of the faithful in this country and in this world. Let us continue to seek God with our whole heart, praying for His will to be done and His Kingdom to come. Let us be His remnant in these dark times, seeking His face with all we are. *He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.”* To which we all respond, “*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”*