

TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH

AUGUST– 2026

SCHEDULE

Sunday School & Sunday Bible Study will resume in September

Sunday Service: 11: a.m.

Wed. Bible Study: 7:00 p.m.

SPEAKERS

August 2: Mark Sunnarborg,
Holy Communion

August 9: Ivan Niemela

August 16: Ivan Niemela

August 23: Ivan Niemela

August 30: Charles
Korhonen

CONTACTS

Website:
www.tapiolachurch.org

Mailing: P.O. Box 531
Houghton, MI 49931

Location:
17602 N. Lake Ave.
Tapiola, MI 49916
(906) 334-2766

Contact:
Pastor Ivan Niemela
(906) 231-0945

At the Door of Mercy

“The LORD shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD...” - Jeremiah 24:1

Jeremiah, the final prophet sent to the Judeans before their exile, urged them to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar rather than resist him. Babylon had already conquered much of Judah, carrying Daniel and many of the nation’s youth into captivity. In this latest conflict, 10,000 craftsmen were taken, along with Ezekiel. Jeremiah was not predicting this second deportation; he was responding to it, unveiling its significance within God’s long-term plan for the world. The complete downfall of Judah had long been foretold, and now it was unfolding step by step before their eyes. Yet despite these clear warnings, the people remained determined to resist both Jeremiah’s call to repentance and Babylon’s advance. The vision of the two baskets of figs, set before the temple door, reveals God’s impending judgment but also His ultimate mercy—offered to those willing to listen and respond.

Both baskets were placed before the temple door, a detail rich with meaning, for the temple was the only place where a penitent soul could be reconciled with God. One basket held edible figs, while the other contained rotten ones. The good figs represented the Judeans taken captive to Babylon, while the bad figs symbolized those who remained in Jerusalem and, for a time, escaped Nebuchadnezzar’s reach. Ironically, God preserved and prepared the good figs so they could return to Judah seventy years later (Jeremiah 25:11). In contrast, the bad figs would be nearly destroyed along with the city during Babylon’s third and final assault (Jeremiah 24:8-10).

Ezekiel, while in captivity among the “good figs,” foretold the fall of Jerusalem and the fate of its remaining inhabitants. To illustrate the devastation Babylon’s siege would bring, he shaved his head and beard. He then burned one-third of the hair, struck another third with a sword, and scattered the final portion to the wind. Ezekiel explained that these actions symbolized the destiny of Jerusalem’s people: one-third would die in the city from hunger and disease, another third would perish in battle, and the last third would be driven into exile among the nations, where they too would be pursued and slain (Ezekiel 5:12). This vision suggests that all the “bad figs” were destined for destruction, yet the placement of both baskets before the temple hints at the possibility of a different outcome.

The location of the fig baskets signifies God’s offer of reconciliation to all who are willing to respond to Him. He invites everyone, regardless of circumstance, to confess their sins voluntarily at the entrance of the tabernacle (Leviticus 1:3). As a result, not all the bad figs were destined to perish. Ezekiel illustrates this hope by hiding a small portion of his hair in his robe (Ezekiel 5:3). This act symbolized that some bad figs still had the opportunity to return to God, while others would face eternal separation because of their stubborn rejection of Him. God’s promise, therefore, extends the grace of salvation even to those considered “rotten figs.” Ultimately, our personal response to His invitation to repent is what truly matters—regardless of which basket we find ourselves in.

For the “good figs” who went into captivity with Ezekiel, God said, *“I will set mine eyes upon them for good”* (Jeremiah 24:6). This meant He would spiritually prepare them, through Ezekiel’s preaching, to return to Judah as His faithful followers. Jeremiah explained that this preparation would span seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10) and would hinge on one crucial element: *“And I will give them an 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 unto me with their whole heart”* (Jeremiah 24:7). Without this inner transformation, returning to Judah would have been an empty ritual. Only those who received this change became the remnant that returned (Ezra 2:64). Like the “rotten figs” in Judah, those in Babylon also needed reconciliation with God. Sadly, most chose to remain in Babylon—proving that time alone was not enough for restoration.

The fall of Judah, the coming of Jesus, and the end of the world have all been prophesied throughout Scripture. Across generations, warnings have been given, yet—as in Judah’s time—only a small number seem genuinely attentive. The signs of the end are clearly outlined in God’s Word, and we can see them unfolding before us today. In Jeremiah’s day, the impending defeat of Judah at the hands of Babylon was evident to all. In our time, many continue to resist God’s call to repent and to receive the gospel of forgiveness, faithfully proclaimed by His messengers.

The two baskets of figs symbolize both personal accountability and the opportunity for reconciliation with God. Placed before the temple door, they remind us that mercy is offered to all who repent at the very threshold of judgment. In the end, our individual response to God’s call is what truly matters. Time is short; will we step through the door of mercy and earnestly cry out, *“... what must I do to be saved?”* (Acts 16:30) before it is too late?

God’s Peace,

Charles Korhonen