While the book of Habakkuk initially feels foreign, once we scratch beneath the surface we understand its immediate application. Written in a time of national trouble and growing international concerns, Habakkuk cries out to God for justice and then wrestles in perplexed faith with the responses God gives.

This Sunday, we focused on Habakkuk 1. The text unfolds in three stages.

THE PROPHET'S COMPLAINT (1:2-4)
Habakkuk's complaint can be summarized with two questions— "How long?" and "Why?". He has repeatedly cried out to God for help, and God hasn't acted. He can't understand why God is allowing violence, strife, and injustice to spread and to surround the righteous in Judah. It seems like Habakkuk can see iniquity, while God looks idly at it.

GOD'S ASTOUNDING RESPONSE (1:5-11)
In verse 5, God responds to Habakkuk's complaint by heightening the astounding nature of what He is going to do. Habakkuk is to look, see, wonder, and be astounded. God is about to act in a way the prophet will struggle to comprehend. God has seen and is responding: He is raising up the Chaldeans (the Babylonians) to destroy the nation of Judah. Four aspects of God's response are unbelievable.

1. **The Breadth of the Judgment:** Habakkuk cried out for justice against the *unrighteous* of Judah, but God is going to execute judgment on the *nation* of Judah.

2. **The Intensity of the Judgment:** God was going to use the Babylonians to punish Judah in a way reminiscent of how God used the Israelites to punish the Canaanites. Habakkuk asked for reform; God responds with ruin.

3. **The Certainty of the Judgment:** There isn't a call for repentance or an avenue of escape. The coming judgment upon Judah cannot be averted.

4. **The Instrument of Judgment:** God was going to use a wicked, guilty, violent, fearsome, and godless nation to judge His people. How is that possible? It is this very question that Habakkuk struggles with the most.

THE PROPHET'S PERPLEXED REPLY (1:12-17)
In verses 12-17, Habakkuk struggles to comprehend how God can do this. How can God punish His unrighteous people at the hands of a more unrighteous nation? The Chaldeans were merciless and wicked. They slaughtered people like they were animals and led them into captivity like they were fish. Is God going to let such wickedness win forever?

TRUTHS FOR TODAY
While we must cautiously avoid making a direct comparison between ancient Judah and modern day America, Pastor Justin ended with four truths for today.

1. **God invites our prayers of complaint.** This is the very context of the book. God looks on those who come to Him in prayer with struggling, perplexed faith, and he doesn't scowl.

2. **God rules over nations.** He is in control of when empires rise or fall, expand or retreat. John Calvin says, "Not by their own instinct, but by the hidden impulse of God" do nations rise or fall.

3. **God executes judgment on nations.** He doesn't only judge individuals but entire nations who persist in their sin and rebellion against Him.

4. **See a glimmer of the gospel.** In our text, God promises to treat His people like they are not His people. This great reversal points us forward to a greater reversal—when the true Israel, Jesus, became the object upon which God poured out His infinite justice. God's Son was treated as not God's Son, and divine judgment swallowed him up in death. Why? So another great reversal could occur, and sinners could be treated by God as sons.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. How does it make you feel knowing that God judges nations, and uses seemingly natural means (e.g., wars with other nations) to do it?
3. All judgment in the Bible (whether the Conquest or the Exile) are pointers to the great Day of Judgment to come. What does the fearsomeness of the judgment spoken of in Habakkuk 1 show you about the Judgment to come? How does it cause you to see your sin differently? How does it make you think of the Cross differently?