

The Blessings of the Recent Plague

A month ago, we could hardly envision that we would have had the unusual April we have had. We've had no NCAA Tournament. No opening day of baseball. No hockey. No Spring events. We looked forward to Pre-Easter Services, to Love Feast, to Good Friday, and most of all, to Easter and the celebration of the bodily Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Since then, so many things have changed. It's funny how the name of a little particle, not even alive in the usual sense of the world, has become a common word. That something we didn't know about at Christmas, changed our entire world by Easter. It reminds me of that saying attributed to the quotable British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan who, when asked what was most likely to affect the course of his government, said "Events, dear boy, events." We've seen events affect the course of the whole world.

That our government would essentially shut down an economy that was humming along, people going to and fro, and social intercourse, was just something we could not even imagine at the beginning of March 2020.

What are we to make of all this? Is this fulfillment of prophecy? I've seen mentions of the 40 day interval from the Bible applied to all this? It is a fulfillment in that as the time of Jesus' return draws nearer, then we can expect the signs of the end to increase. Remember, though, that we have been in the "end times" since Jesus ascended to Heaven. The disciples expected Jesus to return at any time, even in their lifetimes. The church has seen great times and difficult times throughout history. There's nothing new under the sun—not even pestilence such as this COVID-19. There have been plagues of smallpox, black death, influenza, and such like, repeatedly through the ages. The best way to view it is to see it as another situation that proves the faith that we as Christians have. We aren't to worry, but trust that in all this the Lord is working out all things according to His sovereign will.

What are we to do? Think on the ways this coronavirus circumstance has:

1. *Made us yearn for corporate worship and gathered fellowship.* We have found that online or livestream worship does not take the place of actually being together. Seeing faces, hearing voices, and directly interacting with one another cannot be replaced by seeing a service on our computers or devices. It has been rather challenging to speak only to a camera as we have done the livestreams. Even meetings by Zoom (an interactive teleconferencing Internet application) has its limitations. No, we are meant to gather. Human beings are by nature gregarious people, and Christians most of all as "we gather together to ask the Lord's blessing." Can we worship at home by ourselves? Yes, we should, and we also are to worship with God's people. All of our ordinances require being together. Assembling together, baptism, feetwashing, the Lord's Supper, the Communion, the anointing for healing, the laying on of hand, and the holy kiss cannot be done apart from the gathering together of Christians, and cannot be done by isolating, either. So we yearn for those things to be available to us again.

2. *Given us opportunity to get into the Word.* Remember the little "Round Tuits" that some of us used to pass around? We always said we would do something when we got a "Round Tuit." We have now had that time to read, to study, and to meditate on the Word of God. I've heard many say that they are getting "bored" of all of this. Get your Bible! Get to reading! Get to thinking about what God is saying in His Word. You have the time and the opportunity as never before!

3. *Helped us to pray with greater intensity.* Related to reading the Bible, we have also had time to pray more, and to communicate with our Heavenly Father in a greater way. We have slowed down to be able to pause and pray. We are praying for the health and wellbeing of people, for the Lord to end this plague, and to bring about healing for those afflicted with it and other health issues.

4. *Moved us to consider others more.* As you've had time to catch up on chores and long-put-off projects, this coronavirus situation has enabled us to think of others in greater ways that perhaps we have in the past. We are sending notes, ringing folks up on the phone, making food and doing errands for the shut-ins. We've been blessing others in ways we didn't think about a few months ago. We are considering the health of others in our own actions such as handwashing, isolating, and being aware of our surroundings.

5. *Enabled us to appreciate what we have.* If we have a job, groceries, a roof over our heads, a loving family, and our health, we are counting it all a great blessing. We sometimes complain about the relative social barrenness of rural or small-town Indiana, but we're glad we haven't been in New York City, Detroit, or other major cities that have borne the brunt of this plague. What's more, it's helped us to be more generous with the blessings that the Lord has given us.

6. *Challenged us to think of Eternity more.* With the recent strong economy, and the many technological and creature comforts we experience, some think that death and Eternity are far away. This plague has brought the possibility of death closer to our minds. The hysterical fear that many express about death, is because they have a) thought they had many years to live, and b) not really thought about what comes after death. Is there something more, or do we just go to the grave? Christians always know that unless Jesus returns in our time, we will die, and then, eternity. We are to be ready to die, and ready to go to Heaven, by trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

The only way we can do all these things is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Friend, are you afraid of the coronavirus? Are you ready to enter into Eternity? Are you ready to meet God face to face? Will you be in the resurrection of the righteous, or the resurrection of the wicked?

The time to get ready is now. You may have a freezer and pantry full of food, your gas can filled, and your debts paid off. Yet are you ready for that which WILL come—your appointment with God? Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ today!

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