**Plagued by the Finger of God**

Based on [Exodus 8:16-24](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Ex8.16-24)

Preached on March 11, 2020

Lenten Midweek 2

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Plagues have plagued mankind ever since the fall into sin. There are Biblical plagues, such were the ten plagues loosed upon Pharaoh and Egypt. Two of these are from our reading. The four horsemen of the apocalypse in the book of Revelation are said to bring *pestilence*. **Jesus refers to pestilences as being signs of the Last Days and that the end is near.** And there was the Bubonic Plague that is estimated to have killed 30% to 60% of Europe's population. And lately we’ve had pretty regular worldwide plagues with the bird flu, the swine flu, and of course Coronavirus or COVID-19.

Once, when King David sinned, the Lord gave him three options for punishment. Either three years of famine, three years of running from his enemies, or three days of a plague in the land. ***David chose the plague and 70,000 men died.*** He chose the plague saying “Please let us fall into *the Lord’s hands* because his mercies are great, but don’t let me fall into human hands.” Presumably, famine would put him in the hands of greedy men, and being chased by his enemies would put him at the mercy of men also. But the plague, David reasoned, was a direct work of God and

When Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh’s magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, ‘This is the finger of God.’

The ten commandments, we’re told, were inscribed in two stone tablets by the finger of God. As a woman was about to be stoned for adultery, before he saved her Jesus was writing with his finger on the ground. His finger is the literal finger of God.

The finger of God is an expression. The finger points and directs and instructs. The finger writes, as in Daniel and the famous writing on the wall...Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin. The Lord instructs the priest to dip his finger in the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkle it before the Lord in front of the veil of the temple, and on the horns of the altar. And in a boast, King Solomon’s son says, “My little finger is thicker than my father’s thigh.” In other words, boasting about what you can accomplish with your finger indicates power.

All these are appropriate to give meaning to the expression of the magicians’ expression about the plagues “This is the finger of God.” The most simple understanding of their remark is, “God did this”. But there is an imagery there, maybe like the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, of God stretching out his arm to simply touch creation and cause a wonder. We know that God is upholding all things. But not all things indicate his breaking the usual order of things giving a sign.

The pestilences, diseases and pandemic viruses are all signs. The coronavirus is a sign. It’s not a sign that you should repent more than you used to. Signs are simply reassurances that God’s Word is true. That his plan is unfolding. That our redemption is near.

Our redemption was secured 2000 years ago when the son of man came down from heaven, was born of the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man. Plagues and pestilences have come, and they are a sign of God’s wrath on the sin and evil which has corrupted his creation. But the son of Man has come to heal us. He has born our diseases and carried our sorrows. We are the ones who deserve to suffer and die for our sins, but he has done nothing wrong. We deserve wrath and judgment for our failures, but he does all things well. We deserve sickness and death, he has come to bring healing and life. He was stricken, smitten and afflicted and by his wounds we are healed.

So let us not be weighted down with anxieties of the world, but let us be anxious to please God and serve him with our lives.