

Book of the Month

April 2011

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

SUN

***The Plague.* Albert Camus. Vintage Books. New York. 1948.**

OK, I confess: I love reading atheistic existentialist authors. Sartre, Camus, Kafka... strangely enough, they speak to me. They remind me of what life without God is really like: absurd, irrational, pointless. No book succeeds in this endeavor better than Albert Camus's *The Plague*. I can't think of another book that more poignantly portrays a world where sin and death define the very tissue of human existence.

Camus imagines a city in Africa where a deadly plague has broken out. Carried by rats, the disease randomly attacks citizens of the town without regard for status, age or moral character. The plot revolves around the different ways various citizens (a doctor, a fugitive, a priest, vacationers, etc.) respond to life in plague time. Some give in to despair, while others seek to profit from the tragedy. Some live in denial, while others seek to distract themselves with pleasure. Still others look to religion for help. A few find a measure of meaning in caring for the sick and dying. Doctors can only diagnose the problem; they have no power to cure. Death is the only thing that is certain. The rats have the final word.

Often the best way to understand the Christian worldview is to see it in contrast to other worldviews. Reading *The Plague* will help a Christian to have deeper compassion for those "having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). Few books I have ever read have better equipped me to understand what a radical message of Good News we bring to a world where "the plague" eventually kills us all.

Pastor Stan Key