

“Let Creation Sing for Joy”

As you probably already know we have just recently returned from a trip from Alaska. We didn't take a cruise nor did we work through any cruise line. We wanted something more land based and exploratory. Tricia found a company called Alaska Tour and Travel (ATT for short). The rental car company was the first one to refer to them as ATT. When I heard them use the short form I didn't catch on right away. I thought, “How did they know what our phone company was. And why was this even important?” I'm a little slow sometimes but I caught on and it became a little bit of a joke for the rest of the trip.

We contacted ATT and told them roughly where we would like to go. They set up an itinerary which was refined a couple of times and we were off. They were phenomenal by the way, and should be contacted by anyone consider a trip like ours. We managed to visit historic Kennecott/McCarthy where we saw and walked on our first glacier; even ate our meals overlooking the glacier on the deck of the hotel. Then we were off to Fairbanks which is like visiting New Albany, Indiana. We flew in a small plane from there to Coldfoot where we caught van up the Dalton to Wiseman where we met Jack and Nikki who have lived 63 miles of the Artic Circle for most of their lives. Jack's mom had established a little chapel in Wiseman where all eleven residents could come to worship. From Fairbanks we drove to Denali for a round of Whitewater rafting down the Nenana River. The next day we took a bus right through the park and saw all kinds of animals. The Lord gifted us with a perfect weather scenario to see the mountain from top to bottom without a single cloud. We drove next to Talkeetna where we caught a small plane and flew around Denali, again with perfect views, perfect weather. Finally, we traveled to Seward where we took a boat ride through the Fjords watching whales and where we saw a glacier up close as it calved into the sea. It was an incredible two weeks and a great way to celebrate our 25th anniversary.

The whole time we were in Alaska my overriding emotion was a sense of deep gratitude and humility. Everywhere we looked we saw grandeur and beauty. The scale of it was beyond any notion I could have captured in my head. In a conversation with Shay, our guide for the glacier hike on the Root Glacier in Kennecott we talked about the beauty of the Wrangle mountains. We talked a little bit about how heaven must look. She was quick to mention that she hoped that it was as beautiful as the Wrangle mountains. I completely understood her feeling on this. If God can make a fallen world looks this beautiful, imagine what a perfect heaven may look like...and the scale of it. Tricia and I both felt privileged to have seen it. We both were awed and humbled by everything we experienced.

That brings me to Psalm 8. I think Psalm 8 captures how I felt in Alaska. Or should I say I might finally grasp what the Psalmist in Psalm 8 was feeling when it was written. Take a listen.

Psalm 8

A psalm of David.

¹ LORD, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory
in the heavens.

² Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.

³ When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,

⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?



Denali—Pic Taken by PW

⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor.
⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:
⁷ all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,
⁸ the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.
⁹ LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Like the Psalm says, “Who I am that you are mindful of me.” And yet all this creation as powerful as it is cannot overshadow the value of a human being. God made all of His creation to share with humanity. He put Adam and Eve on the earth to rule over and subdue. But we also know that the planet itself gives witness the greatness of God.

The bus driver in Denali, the Pilot in Talkeetna, and even Shay found their way to Alaska on the short term. The came for a summer and then kept coming back. The place has a definite magnetism. The landscape. The wild life. It’s the bears we saw, the moose we saw, the whales we saw. Even the Aura, (Northern Lights). I think Alaska is a place that draws one closer to the Creator, even if one does not know the Lord. One can sense a touch of the divine in all of Alaska’s beauty and something deep down wants to be a part of that. I can certainly appreciate the draw. Tricia and I are already thinking of a return trip.

Yet isn’t this the tone of Psalm 8. It’s just a sense of gratitude. The Psalmist looks around at the birds, the wild animals, the grandeur of it all and breaks out in praise to God. This is how we felt about our trip to Alaska. We have a much deeper appreciation for our Lord in a whole new way. But the Psalm does one other thing. It invites us to look around where we are—to the tress, to the wildlife, to the skies, the colorful leaves in the fall, the butterflies and hummingbirds, the storms, the spring flowers, to those sunny perfect days—look in wonder at the creativeness of our God. It is all designed to instill in us a longing for our Lord. There is gratitude that in all that detail you and I are still His favorite part of it all. One can only imagine what the Lord is making for us in Heaven.

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Matthew Woods
John 3:30