

THE GREATEST ATTEMPT -- REFLECTIONS FROM ICELAND

Posted on June 28, 2022 by Emily Taylor



My family and I are currently in Iceland. (Perhaps you remember [my husband's 7-ness](#).) We may be crazy for exiting Nebraska during our 90 degree day month, but despite the multiple layers of clothing, it's a new version of beauty for me, and I am so grateful. Last week I wrote about how [I don't understand](#) some of the hard things God allows. I'm still wrestling with that... but in this place I'm also moved by what he does with beauty. The contrast of colors and the awe in our hearts as our eyes gulped in the magnitude of a waterfall has been both a comfort and a call to worship. How something can be so beautiful and also so dangerous sort of commands solemnity. All of this came from the mind of one who delighted in creating it. And I do not understand how he did that either.

I think God delights in using [beauty to speak](#) (check out Psalm 19). but all of the most beautiful places and lavish luxuries fall decisively short of satisfying our souls on their own. **Beauty comforts and commands, it nourishes and invites. It fixes our gaze and points to something bigger... but it's power can only be fully absorbed when we**

appreciate it as created and not creator. Because the created will never take on more glory than the creator. The created was purposed to point... and when our eyes drink in beauty and tastes the delicious flavor of hope, it is hope in something more than what is before us, it is hope in *what it speaks of*.

Here's What I Mean:

Sound strange? Deep waters are my favorite, but let's get practical. Brandon found a hike to some hot springs the other day, and we set out as a family. The 2 1/2 mile jaunt was a glorious collection of color and sounds, quiet and exercise, crisp air and a finale of heat-induced relaxation (at least beyond the effort of managing the hunger needs of our people — FYI, cliff bars and fruity snacks can buy a lot of time). Back to the point — **beauty is big, relationships are powerful, fresh air is healthy and God declared all of that to be true regardless of whether we acknowledge him in it or not.** *With God*, I would have observed the very same thing... but his presence changes everything. His presence breathes to life truth we are otherwise blind to. He whispers reminders about Psalm 23 when I see sheep, he asks me to look at his creation and remember his might. When my eyes drink in the laughs of my children, he reminds me that I am his child and he delights in me. When I go home, my Lord is still with me. When I leave the trails, the experience isn't just over, because some forever truths were etched into my heart as I experience the day.

Here's the thing — you do not have to be in the cascading hills of Iceland to sense God's presence fall around you in life-changing ways. **Beauty speaks, but it is the presence of the creator that changes everything. Experiencing creation apart from the creator has its limitations.**

Our Greatest Attempt

Without the presence of God, every interaction with beauty is our greatest attempt at joy. Our greatest attempt at peace. Our greatest attempt to grieve or hope or taste eternity. Our greatest attempt to live in proximity to glory, to be noticed, or feel satisfied. There are places and people and experiences of the majestic that can take our very breath away... to a point. For a time. It will probably cost us something, and it cannot be ultimately depended on. **Our greatest attempt at life at it's fullest measure falls decisively short of the fullness of being known, of being satisfied in,**

of being comforted by the creator of our hearts and the one who delights in us.

If life at it's fullest measure hinges on what we've done with Jesus, we must, we *must* look at him. Everything else is a shadow glimpse of what we were ultimately made for.