

About this time last week, Sarah and I were drawing to a close our three thousand-plus kilometers of driving, and yes, it did take us awhile to get used that unit of measurement in shaping our day-to-day experience of another country. Nevertheless, in the almost two thousand *miles*’ worth, there are certain things to conclude about the nation of Iceland: if you’re looking for architecture to rival the Eiffel Tower in France or the Sistine Chapel in Italy or the Taj Mahal in India, you’re looking in the wrong place. If you’re hoping to go to museums upon museums displaying the lengthy story about a national history that goes back as long as the rest of Europe, your hope will not be met there. But if you’re searching for the breath-taking, if you’re on the lookout for the pure richness of God’s Creation, if you’re craving the sights that will force your humble eyes to do double-takes at every possible kilometer, Iceland is more than the divine place to be.

And yet, it remains one of many nations across the entire world that hardly ever gets recognized with any kind of news headlines. The politics aren’t disgusting enough. There isn’t enough violence in their streets. They don’t seem to instill policies that make others cringe. There just isn’t enough animosity amongst their own people, or from foreigners. They just

aren't...interesting enough, evidently: these other nations of seemingly little to no consequence for the rest of us.

Except, the word has gotten out about what has to be some kind of God-driven beauty in Iceland. Tourism has soared hundreds of percent in the last ten years. Only around three hundred thousand people live in the entire country, and the expectation is by 2020, two million foreigners will come in to check out their national backyard. So, it's quite safe to say, that the thousands of kilometers we traveled were more occupied by tourists than the Icelandic people themselves.

However, the most fascinating, what we thought was a tourist bus that we saw, came about this same time last week. It was the one day that hardly anything seemed to go right for the two of us. We drove from one end of the country to the other to, hopefully, see some of the sights we missed out on due to weather conditions the morning we arrived, but let's just say Google Maps didn't care so much about that plan. We drove down these treacherous terrains, to end up seeing not much of anything. The places we thought would join the ranks of the other breath-taking places we witnessed, didn't exactly reach such heights. It was just...one of those days.

However, we, then, drove up to what's called the Gunnuhver Geothermal Area. Now, we don't need to get too much into the science behind these spots throughout Iceland, because, for starters I'm not nearly smart enough to explain it. But with Iceland's array of volcanoes and being on the rift of tectonic plate movements over history, the magma level below the earth's surface, is closer in Iceland, and thus this warm water springs up out of the ground: almost this smoky mist of sorts. But, again, what was by far more fascinating was this bus that was already there.

It wasn't full with the usual annoying Americans carrying around their tripods to set up their thousands of dollars' worth of cameras to get the absolutely perfect shot at just the precise angle to show off to their family and friends back in the states. No, this bus was filled with Icelandic people, but they were youth who were differently-abled than the rest of us. One teenage boy was being pushed around in a wheel-chair around this one spring that gushed up to the sky, and you could get just close enough to feel a soothing warmth amidst the cold bitter air. Such nature at work brought a joyous smile and contagious laughter to the boy, contagious enough to reel us tourists in too.

“Seek good...that you may live,” so calls the prophet Amos, and it’s being done behind our backs and right in front of our very eyes. Good is being sought out and then some in the nations that will never get recognized, including in Iceland, where they care so deeply for those who are differently-abled than the rest of us. It’s also being done in nations where only the worst of headlines are ever proclaimed for the rest of us to hear and see. It’s also being done in our own national backyard, not just by the mentally and physically and financially elite, but by those who have a contagiousness of joy and laughter to absolutely shatter the evil that tries to take over.

Of course, the ultimate goodness that gives the hope to all the nations is not by their own people or even from those in distant lands, but by the One Who isn’t a distant heaven, and is, instead, the One Who came into the backyard of our humanity, and unleashed the earth-saving love that can never be taken away. God sought out the good for all humanity in Jesus Christ, and it was more than won on the cross and out of the empty tomb for all nations to enjoy. So may there be even the slightest semblance of that most soothing peace that only contagious joy and laughter can ever come close to describing; may that peace be upon them all now and forevermore. Amen.