

Last year the National Park Service recorded 327.5 million visits to the National Parks of the U.S. The estimated population of the U.S. that same year was 329 million. Nearly as many people visited our National Parks as live in the country. That statistic is somewhat incredible considering the fact that most of our National Parks consist of big rocks and big holes! Yet these big rocks that we call “mountains”, and these big holes that we call “canyons” and “caves”, draw in people by the hundreds of millions, and the vast majority of these people come simply to look at these places. Why is that?



The answer is simple. It is because they are *beautiful*. Our country boasts many truly beautiful places. High and majestic mountains. The Great Oceans and all their plant and animal life. Mighty canyons, gorges, geysers, lakes, and rivers. Wild animals in abundance, many of which are found no where else on earth. (Such as the Bison found in Theodore Roosevelt National Park near my home.) None of these mountains, rivers, or animals need a billboard or a TV commercial to convince someone that they are worth seeing. The Park Service doesn't seem concerned with getting commercials into the Superbowl. The beauty and worth of these places is manifestly self-evident.



God has made us in such a way that we appreciate and respond to beauty. This is still true of us despite the Fall. Fallen human beings still innately respond to beauty. We know beauty when we see it. We are captivated by beauty, and as beautiful as the many Parks of our nation are, the God who made them is even more beautiful. They are simply a dim shadow of His surpassing beauty.

People like talking about “what’s wrong” with the American Church. Everybody has an idea about what to do. There’s a new book written about a new program or strategy every week. We are consumed by the fads that pass through our churches like waves in the ocean. We need to take a lesson from God’s Creation. The mountains are not worried about a program. The oceans are not worried about their marketing strategy. If our young people are failing to see the beauty of Christ and the Godhead, if people are passing through our churches like tumbleweeds on the plains, then maybe the problem isn’t with our programs. Maybe the problem is that we haven’t shown them God. And maybe we haven’t shown them God, because we don’t know God.

Pastor, Sunday School Teacher, Christian, though there is nothing inherently wrong with a program, a better program is not really what you need, what you need, is to know God. You need to know God, to be captivated by His beauty, to be daily growing in your knowledge of Him. When you see God, and know God, and proclaim that God, His beauty will be self-evident to those around you. I have seen the Himalayan Mountains, Everest and the works, the Swiss Alps by moonlight, the Rocky Mountains, the great wonders of Australia, the wild spaces of Alaska, the worlds greatest oceans, and though all were incredibly beautiful, none have captivated me as much, or left me more satisfied, than knowing the God who made them. *“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” – Phil. 3:8* Christian, show them God.



*Sincerely,
A Plaid Pastor*

-by Pastor Josh Emmel, Faith Baptist Church, Kenmare, ND