

Pastor Brian's
Midweek Message
July 27, 2022

"I'M BACK!!!"

"For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land."

(Psalm 95:3-5)

Kay and I flew home yesterday after 2 ½ weeks on the road, in the air, and at sea. It seemed that nearly a week of that time was spent standing in lines. Most notably we had to clear US customs in Vancouver BC, before boarding a flight to Seattle and then on to Spokane, WA. After more than 2 hours in that queue we got to our gate a minute or two after the boarding door was closed and missed the flight. Fortunately, there was another one going about 3 hours later. Such are the joys of traveling in these times.

Not to dwell on the negative, I want to do a little "show and tell" on our adventure today. The center point of our vacation was an Alaskan cruise. The way I see it, God created this beautiful earth and it's up to me to go see His wonders. On Sunday July 10th, after negative Covid tests were received by our traveling party of 5 and a lot of standing in lines, we boarded Royal Caribbean's Serenade of the Seas for a 7 day adventure.



Not the biggest of all cruise ships, but good sized, nonetheless. Our accommodations were comfortable, a little cramped of course, and the ship had everything we needed for our weeklong stay. For the most part the food was good, and it was most certainly plentiful! The mattress was sufficiently firm and the views were at times spectacular. The weather could have cooperated a bit more, it was chilly and damp much of the week, but that didn't deter us in the least, except when we stood in lines outdoors.

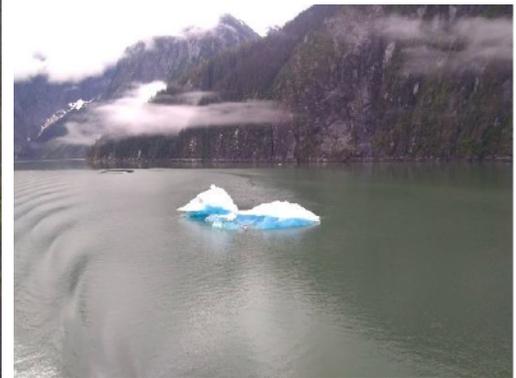
Pastor Brian's
Midweek Message
July 27, 2022

Our first port of call was Ketchikan, at the southern end of the Alaska panhandle. We took a tour that taught us all about totem poles. They are all hand carved to commemorate major events and to tell stories. This one is over 100 years old. It commemorates a peace treaty between two different tribes of indigenous peoples.



The photo is a little washed out because it was taken in a steady rain. The pole originally had two wings at the top, one on each side, but frequent storms packing winds up to 100mph kept blowing the one on the right off. After several reattachments the locals finally gave up on trying to fix it after each storm.

The next morning all on board our ship got up early and went out in the wind and cold (it wasn't raining) as we sailed up the Tracy Arm Fjord toward the glacier bearing that same name, minus the word fjord. The size and number of little icebergs, termed "growlers" when they're of minor size, increased all the way along.



Our ship's captain managed to avoid all of them, and we approached the glacier for an encounter that was closer than any previous cruise had gotten so far this year. It put on quite

a show as a large chunk broke off and fell into the water in front of us. Fortunately, we were protected by the large rock right in front of us.

Kindly scroll down to the next page

Pastor Brian's
Midweek Message
July 27, 2022



The dark blue color at the bottom is an indication of the density of the ice. The captain told us it was good that it was a cloudy morning as bright sunlight washes out a lot of the blue.

The nicest weather day was spent up in Skagway, Alaska, which was the “jumping off point” for the Yukon Gold Rush of the late 19th century. The sun was shining, and the temperature got to almost 70 degrees. Man...was it HOT! They have a narrow-gauge railroad train you could ride up to White Pass (we didn't) and lots of tee-shirt shops. The history museum and gardens were quite impressive. The gardens were mostly sculptures and large historic pictures. The growing season is too short for anything else besides evergreens.

The BIGGEST deal of the whole cruise came as the ship was anchored in Sitka, right out on the Pacific coast. We got off one boat and immediately got on another much smaller one to tour the islands and bays looking for bald eagles, bears, sea otters and whales. I guess the bears took that day (Friday) off. We did see one bald eagle (I typically see more than that around here in a day), a couple of groups of sea otters floating on their backs eating their lunch, and our first mate spotted a gray whale. They knew approximately where it was from reports from other boats that morning. Grays are often found in shallower water as they scrape along the bottom to scoop up shrimp, crabs, and whatever other little goodies they can find to eat. From there we headed out into deeper waters to look for humpback whales. The boat came upon a pod of 4 or 5 of them just kind of ambling along. From a distance you can see the spray of water going up as they surface to breathe, and then the back of the whale (complete with the hump) comes up before the whole thing disappears for a short time. After a few breathes down they go for 5-10 minutes and as they do the tail fluke come out of the water. As we were about to head back to the dock one of these behemoths surfaced about 10 yards off our port side.

Pastor Brian's
Midweek Message
July 27, 2022



After a couple of minutes down it went again, showing off its tail flukes to all who were aboard. On the way back we greeted a few seal lions who were using a navigational marker buoy to take their naps. From there we reboarded the ship for the nearly 2-day journey back to Vancouver, BC.

Once the cruise was over, we spent 3 days in Vancouver, with a ferry and bus trip over to Victoria, BC, and then flew to Spokane to see old friends for about a week. I guess I'll have to tell you more about that next week. The bottom line of all of this is that God's creation certainly speaks out boldly of His glory and creativity, but given the state of air travel and the headaches of getting through customs we don't think we'll be doing all that much distant sightseeing for quite some time. It's good to be home and back with you all!

After a couple of minutes down it went again, showing off its tail flukes to all who were aboard. On the way back we greeted a few seal lions who were using a navigational marker buoy to take their naps. From there we reboarded the ship for the nearly 2-day journey back to Vancouver, BC.

Once the cruise was over, we spent 3 days in Vancouver, with a ferry and bus trip over to Victoria, BC, and then flew to Spokane to see old friends for about a week. I guess I'll have to tell you more about that next week. The bottom line of all of this is that God's creation certainly speaks out boldly of His glory and creativity, but given the state of air travel and the headaches of getting through customs we don't think we'll be doing all that much distant sightseeing for quite some time. It's good to be home and back with you all!