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## Viewpoints

*Observing events in our modern world from the viewpoint of our ascended Savior.*

### So Close, Yet So Far ~ June 1, 2016

**Saved by grace through faith alone in Jesus. Nothing else comes close.**

[Online Version & Archive](#)

I had to go potty while hunting in the Rocky Mountains. If you've never been solo in the deep backcountry, this might seem to be overkill: but I used blaze-orange flagging tape to mark where I left the feint trail to reach a level place for using the restroom. The temporary flag assured my return to the nearly invisible game trail.

Too bad Geraldine Largay didn't use flagging tape when she used the restroom. Largay was solo backpacking the Appalachian Trail in July 2013 when nature called and she momentarily left the trail. What was to be a routine diversion turned into confusion in the rugged and deeply forested terrain. Her attempts to re-locate the trail led her further away. When she finally came to grips with the awful truth that she was lost, and set up shelter to await rescue, she assumed she was 3 to 4 miles away from the trail.

In reality, she was only 1 mile from the trail. And even though one of the Appalachian Trail's most intensive and expansive searches was conducted for the next twelve days, she remained lost. From her text messages (that never reached a cell tower) and a journal that she kept, authorities discovered that she died in her sleeping bag from lack of food about a month after leaving the trail. Some two years after she disappeared, in October 2015, surveyors on contract with the government happened to find her tent, backpacking equipment and remains. And in the last week, authorities released some of the information retrieved from her texts and journal that answers questions surrounding her disappearance.

This is how we come to know she became lost using the potty. And that she was actually only 1 mile off the trail. And only 2 miles from a parking lot. And only 100 yards away from a passing dog-tracking search and rescue team. So close, yet so far.

As I read the news accounts, I was gladdened to see that she had a rosary with her. This indicates that she had association with the Christian faith. But this also leaves me concerned, because the rosary is generally used for praying to the Virgin Mary and for also depending on the good works of the Virgin Mary, which when combined, supposedly earns good works that supposedly helps in meriting Christ's forgiveness.\*

But Christ's forgiveness cannot be earned or merited, ever. Not even by the Virgin Mary. Did you know that Mary praised God as her Savior from sin, because the Father was using her to bring the Savior Jesus into the world? "And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my

spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant” (Luke 1:46-48).

My friends, I pray that you understand that the idea of “salvation by works” is the complete opposite of and nullification of scripture’s truth that we are saved by grace through faith alone in Jesus.

- Praying to the Virgin Mary, instead of going directly to Jesus as the only mediator between God and mankind, is the opposite of trusting God’s grace in Christ (see [1 Timothy 2:5](#) and [Matthew 11:28-29](#).)
- Likewise, to pray to the Virgin Mary for her help to merit Christ’s forgiveness is the opposite of being saved by grace through faith in Christ (see [1 John 2:1-2](#)).

Praying to and trusting in Mary’s help for meriting Christ’s forgiveness may seem close to the saving faith, but in reality it is far away.

Scripture clearly and precisely declares that we are saved by grace (God’s unearned love) through faith alone in Christ. The Apostle Paul explains: “We were by nature objects of [God’s] wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved... For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:3-4 & 8-9).

Geraldine Largay was so close, yet so far from being rescued by rescue teams and search dogs! Being close is not close enough.

I pray that the rosary was only a relic of previous teachings that she had left behind, so that in the end, she had the faith to know and trust in Jesus alone, confident that all her sins were fully forgiven by Jesus when he died on the cross and rose again. For then, even though she remained lost from human rescuers, she was safely kept in the grace of Jesus Christ. And if she died trusting that we are saved by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ, then I know where she will be found in eternity: beside her Savior Jesus in heaven. ✚

*Source Material (Links may become inactive over time.)*

\*What scripture teaches is contradicted by the Roman Catholic Church. The official teachings of its catechism are posted at the Vatican website. See [Section X. Indulgences: In the communion of Saints, paragraph 1474 to especially 1477](#). Also see [Prayers to Mary, ARTICLE 2, THE WAY OF PRAYER \(see paragraph 2682, Prayers to Mary\)](#). And finally, see [Mary - Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church, Article 9, Paragraph 6 \(see especially paragraphs 966, 968, 974 & 975\)](#).

[Missing Hiker...Kept Journal...In Woods](#) @ centralmaine.com

[Hiker Largay died in sleeping bag...](#) @ centralmaine.com

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*Blessings to you and your loved ones, Pastor Mike Nitz*

