



Bethany Lutheran Church & Early Childhood Ministry

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Viewpoints

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

A Man's Man ~ June 20, 2017

A man's man can summit a peak, but who can blaze the summit of heaven?

[Online Version & Archive](#)

A hefty snowpack means mountain climbers face tough conditions in the Colorado Rockies this summer. In fact, Rocky Mountain National Park has this warning posted: "The route...resembles nothing of its normal summer conditions. Snow has buried some of the recognizable features, creating difficult route finding. The bull's eyes are buried under snow on most sections of the route. Snow has filled in many of the narrow ledges making them steeper and more exposed. Safe climbing beyond the Keyhole requires mountaineering experience and appropriate equipment."

The bull's eyes are big, bright markers painted onto rocks for keeping climbers on route and out of trouble. The Keyhole is a prominent rock formation on one of the easier routes used for summiting Long's Peak (14,259 feet). So if this year's snowpack makes the Keyhole Route so dangerous, Kiener's Route must be off-the-charts. Kiener's Route is supreme with its stunning beauty, but it's also a much more difficult climb.

Walter Kiener was a man's man. He already was an accomplished mountaineer in his native Swiss Alps before he relocated to the Rockies as a young man. But he wasn't just a climber who repeatedly conquered Long's Peak, he was an explorer who blazed a new route up the east face of the peak, the route that now bears his name. But then he also desired to be the first person to make this east-face-ascent in winter.

Kiener and his climbing partner, Agnes Vaille, had attempted this winter climb twice before. His opportunity to try again happened on January 10, 1925 when he thought conditions looked favorable. And in fact, Kiener and Miss Vaille, did reach the summit. But it came at a great price...

A storm came in during the climb.... Vaille succumbed to exhaustion during the descent. She fell down a steep face... above the Boulder Field. Kiener left Vaille in sub-zero weather and descended to Timberline Cabin to organize a rescue party. In the meantime, Vaille died of exposure. One of those on the rescue, Herbert Sortland, also perished in the storm. The climb cost Kiener heavily with frostbite on his fingers and toes. One or more joints on the fingers of each hand had to be amputated as well as all of his toes on one foot and several on the other foot... and the accident left him scarred for life psychologically.

Few would argue with the generalization that to be a man's man takes great determination

and skill. And in the case of Walter Kiener, it also required great sacrifice. But blazing Kiener's Route and then using it to summit Long's Peak during a winter storm is a walk in the park compared to what the carpenter from Nazareth did for us.

When the Son of God appeared on earth, he set aside the technical clothing and equipment of his divine power ([Philp 2:5-8](#)) in order to be our prophesied substitute ([Isaiah 53:4-6](#)). His mission was to perfectly summit life in our place, one perfect step of holiness after another ([Heb 4:15](#)). He accomplished this as he also carried the weight of all mankind's eternal welfare on his back. Then at the summit of hellish Golgotha, he suffered the never-ending frostbite of being forsaken by his eternal Father ([Matt 27:45-46](#)). But from under the avalanche of sin's punishment, Jesus emerged in his gloriously resurrected body to lead us, who trust in him as God and Savior, to the summit of eternal life ([Phil 3:20-21](#)).

Walter Kiener was a man's man. His story encourages me to dream that someday I might traverse Kiener's Route to summit Long's Peak. But then again, Kiener's superhuman efforts to experience life at the top of the world ended in disfigurement and death. Which is why Christ is The One we all want to admire and worship as mankind's Savior. It is this mountaineer who won't fail us as we climb through life until, by his abiding presence, we'll summit heaven itself. ²¹**Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.** ²⁴**To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy--** ²⁵**to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (Jude 21,24-25) †**

For further study: climbing Long's Peak and the story of Walter Kiener were used in the sermon preached on Father's Day. [Click here to download the 6/18/2017 sermon, "Firm Footing."](#)

[Source Material \(Links may become inactive over time.\)](#)

[Long's Peak: Keyhole Route Information](#)

[Tragedy haunted Longs Peak climber Walter Kiener](#)

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Blessings to you and your loved ones, Pastor Mike Nitz

