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# Resurrection

LUTHERAN CHURCH



May 2021

## UNDER THE SURFACE



Winchester Cathedral in England is one of the largest cathedrals in all of Europe, but in the early 1900's it looked as though it was all going to crumble down as huge cracks appeared. Some of these cracks were wide enough for owls to roost in. And even more worrisome, chunks of stone were falling to the ground. The reason for this is that the city of Winchester lies in a river valley with a high-water table and peaty, soft soil. The combination of these two things was actually causing the cathedral to sink!

The first plan to fix this was to dig narrow trenches below the cathedral and fill them with concrete, but because of the high-water table, water would fill the trenches as they were being dug. It seemed like the cathedral was doomed. That was until someone had the idea to hire a deep-sea diver, someone by the name of William Walker, to dive down under the water itself to do the work!

As an article from the Winchester Cathedral website states:

“From 1906, Walker labored under water below the Cathedral for six hours a day at depths up to 6 meters (20 ft). He worked in total darkness, using his bare hands to feel his way through the cloudy, muddy water. His huge, heavy diving suit took a long time to put on. So when he stopped for lunch, he'd just take off his helmet. He also sometimes smoked his pipe, which he thought would kill off any germs. It took him six years to excavate the flooded trenches and fill them with bags of concrete. When he'd finished, all the groundwater could be pumped out and the subsiding walls safely underpinned by bricklayers.” (<https://www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk/our-heritage/famous-people/william-walker-the-diver-who-saved-the-cathedral/>)

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Talk about tough working conditions! But it was his hard work and dedication that saved the cathedral. What is also amazing is that during these 6 years, functions of the church went on as normal. There is a song by one of my favorite bands, Big Big Train, that focuses on this story. It's called *Winchester Diver*. Lyrics like, "Two worlds apart The people say their Sunday prayers Music fills the vaulted space The organ covers up the hammer falls But the water's edge is closer than you think You could see it in his staring eyes The dripping shell, the lower parts of Hell" highlight a juxtaposition, which the writer of the song Greg Spawton speaks to.

"Civilized society seems to have a hold on us but it can very quickly reach a tipping point and unravel, it is a thin veneer. That metaphor of "the water's edge is closer than you think" was a strong one for me. You can move very quickly from a very stable situation into chaos, into the depths of hell as it's described, and Walker's story was a gripping one to use to explore different ideas. The juxtaposition of the hell that he was working in below and the Cathedral above couldn't be more perfect, there in one place, at one moment in time, the two worlds apart, the heaven and the hell." (The Making of The Underfall Yard: an extended interview with Greg Spawton by Dave Bowler)

So why am I sharing all of this with you? Well, I would say our society has definitely reached a tipping point over the last year. So many people who looked strong and sturdy like the cathedral have felt like their foundations are weakening and therefore crumbling. We never know what is going on in the foundations of someone else. As we think of our own lives over the past year, maybe we can relate to this feeling. What we thought society, church, our routines, everything really looked like has changed and we need our foundations to be stabilized.

As we recognize this about ourselves and those around us, try and extend grace to everyone you meet whenever possible. You never what is going on under the cathedrals of their lives. Right below the beautiful songs and the "Sunday Morning's best" we see at service, are so many different insecurities, pains of the past, and wounds that need healing. So be kind and gracious with the love of the one who dives into our lives to stabilize our foundations. Our diver is Jesus Christ and he is our firm foundation. He is the solid rock when everything else is sinking sand! He is the rock on which the church shall stand even when steeples are falling! He goes under the surface to raise us all up to Resurrection Life! So take time as you live the Resurrection to be mindful of how you can share his love with people who are having a tough time under the surface.

In Jesus' Love,  
Pastor Matt

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Doubleheader Sunday—May 16th at 8 and 10:30 AM**

Please make note on your calendar that our next Doubleheader Sunday, where we have both our Traditional Service at 8am and our Contemporary Service at 10:30 am will take place on May 16th! We look forward to seeing you at either service for worship and communion!



### **Zoom Bible Study to Focus on CRU Say Yes Afterschool Program—May 19th at 7 PM**

Join us for a special Zoom Bible Study on May 19th as we explore more of how we can get the church prepared to work toward launching an after school program here at RLC!

### **Spring Voters' Meeting will be moved to June 13th**

Much like the Fall Voters' Meeting we will be delaying the Spring Voters Meeting to give the Executive Council extra time to prepare. During this time part of the Executive Council will be meeting as the Nominating Committee to determine folks we might think would do well in open positions on the Executive and Parish Counsel. So keep your ears open you might be contacted to consider serving!



## WHEN GOD SAYS NO by Kelsi Klembara [1517.org/articles/when-god-says-no](https://1517.org/articles/when-god-says-no)



When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, No; but I am the Commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" And the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so" (Josh 5:13-15).

Joshua has just taken over as leader of the Israelites. He has led them safely across the Jordan River and into the promised land as God, yet again, miraculously parted the waters. He has overseen the circumcision of all the adult men, and he has prepared for battle - for wars - that he is probably well aware will span the rest of this lifetime. In other words, Joshua has been faithful. He knows and trusts in God. Nothing he has done would lead us to believe that God does not stand for him. It's for these reasons that the Commander of the Lord's Army's, "No," to Joshua's question comes as a shock to us.

We are shocked because when we come to God with our faithful obedience to make a case for our just cause, we expect to hear his deliverance in the form of a "yes." Yet here we read, the messenger of God – the pre-Incarnate Christ himself – gives Joshua nothing more than a simple, solitary "No." No. He is not for the Israelites. No. He is not for their adversaries either.

If this were the only information we were given about God, there would certainly be cause for anxiety and concern. Why fight for a God who isn't for us? Why believe in a God who doesn't care about us and yet demands our loyalty all the same? We might even assume Joshua would feel the same way. But when Joshua hears these answers and the Commander reveals his true identity, all Joshua can do is fall on his face and worship. God doesn't answer "no" and then abandon Joshua; God answers "no" to remind Israel's new leader of who he is. He is not just the Commander of the Lord's Army, but the Savior of his people. Thus a "no" from him can't contradict what he has already done or what he has promised to do. Joshua's fears, the ones he comes to the Commander with in hopes of receiving a yes, are still answered because that "no" reveals God won't deter from his path to save us in exchange for what we would settle for as victory.

No. He's not for you in your battle to the top. No. He's not for your adversary in their assertion of power, either. His purpose is not to prop up one side over another, even if it's the side of his father's chosen people. Why? Because he knows the hearts of his creatures all too well.

We will always do our best to turn the Commander of the Lord's Army into our mouthpiece of propaganda, a tool to fit our purpose and spread our cause. Even when we have the best intentions, we are apt to stuff Christ into our causes. In today's language, we might say we are prone to use Christ to confirm our own biases. We will always do our best to turn the Commander of the Lord's Army into our mouthpiece of propaganda, a tool to fit our purpose and spread our cause.

But Christ came for more than the needs of the poorest and least among us and for more than the arguments of the smartest and wisest. He came for more than the rage of the righteous and for more than the loyalty of the most dedicated servants. And so we see how despite his people's insistence that God fight for their desires, their wishes, and their good, that he continues to save them according to his plan. He does this from Joshua onward – despite rebellion, betrayal, doubt, and selfish manipulation. And eventually, he reveals exactly why he won't be defined by just one cause for one people: on the cross, he goes into battle with sin, death, and the devil to die for each and every one of us.



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It's on the cross where we finally understand this "no" in terms of Christ's resounding "yes" because it's on the cross that Christ reveals what he's fighting for: He's fighting for the redemption of the entire world. He's not just fighting for us, but for our adversaries - the worst of the worst and the best of the best. On the cross, the Commander of the Lord's Army fights for us by dying, and in dying, he takes our sin from us, including the sin that diminishes our God into nothing more than a weapon in our self-serving, self-justifying fights.

There is a danger here in assuming that God's "no" means that he doesn't care about what makes us grieve or suffer or lament: that he doesn't care to protect us and that he isn't for us when we really need him to be. But it's because he is a God that says "no" to our demand for him to take our side alone that we can approach him as Joshua did: honestly, with all passion and fervor for the fight we think is right. We can approach him without fear that he will knock us down because of what side we stand on. And so too can our adversaries. So can those who have wronged us, hurt us, and broken us. God's "no" for one side allows him to say yes to drawing near to us. Near enough where we can hear both his words of law and gospel. Near enough where we can weakly and half-heartedly repent (as is our tendency) when we are in the wrong and be renewed by his forgiveness.

His victory doesn't shore up our argument for why we should win and others should lose. To these fights, he answers with a resounding, "no." No. I won't be for what you think I should be for. But yes, I am here for you as you cry out in anger and pain and suffering all the same. He goes to battle to die for our enemies and us, so his "no" is the best "yes" we could ask for.

#### **ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR**

Kelsi Klembara works as editor-in-chief for 1517. She is the co-editor of Theology of the Cross: Luther's Heidelberg Disputation & Reflections on its 28 Thesis, and is currently pursuing her MA in Reformation Studies from Concordia Irvine. Kelsi contributes to both Christ Hold Fast and 1517. She lives with her husband, Doug, in Dallas, Texas.