

Just As ... I AM

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
(Ephesians 2:10)

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Unison

1. Just as I am,
2. Just as I am,
3. Just as I am,

The image shows a handwritten musical score on aged paper. It features a treble and bass clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a five-line staff with various note values and rests. Below the staff, the lyrics are written in three stanzas, each corresponding to a different vocal part or variation of the melody.

Charlotte Elliott wrote the familiar hymn “Just As I Am” in 1834. Born in 1789, a severe illness at age 32 left her unable to care for herself. Charlotte thereafter lived with her younger brother, Henry.

The parish he pastored in the resort town of Brighton, England, decided to hold a bazaar. Its proceeds would fund a school building and scholarships for underprivileged children.

Charlotte felt herself useless because she could not assist with preparations.

This hymn’s stanzas embodied her cries in answer to the despair. She then offered it as encouragement in a collection she called *The Invalid’s Hymnbook* (1836).



Just As I Am ... its beloved lines memorably testify to the sanctity of every human life. Almighty God does “receive, welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve” each member of our race with the heart of a Heavenly Father and the arms of a Gracious Savior. No ages, appearances, or abilities, no impairments or illnesses, not even guilt and grief can exclude from a place in His kingdom and a part in His family. We get to rejoice in our own lives and in our neighbors as gift and privilege. If our Lord’s forgiving favor can overcome sinful failures, then His lavish love will more than make up for human limitations.

“Just” has become an especially precious word for Lutherans. Its verb “justify” occupies the heart of the Gospel. The Holy One Himself gives the reason for every existence by declaring humankind righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ. “Just” means “worthy,” but it also means “barely.”

Any humanity from fertilization to final breath amounts to enough.

God’s creating work, redeeming labors, and calling activities never come up short. Persons undergoing surprise pregnancy, experiencing disability, or suffering terminal diagnosis matter as much as you and me. Indeed, they matter as much as the Son of Man, since Jesus incarnates all of our conditions and carries every sorrow. Even when human mouths cannot utter “I am,” Lord God lends them His own likeness and proclaims, “I AM!”

We Lutherans love life because He first loved all.



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