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We have an amazing Lord

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Texts: Mark 16:4–8; 2 Corinthians 4:1–7; Isaiah 40:6–11

In this afternoon’s Gospel

Three women, two Marys, and Salome, come to the place where they buried Jesus.

The very large stone was rolled back! A young man sitting, dressed in a white robe, said to them: You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is not here, He has risen! And they were amazed.

This is the Easter Story: We have An Amazing Lord!

We have an Amazing Lord. Not only on Easter Sunday but also through the whole History of Salvation. Edmund Steimle the noted Lutheran radio preacher, has suggested: Imagine yourself in God’s Place. back in the days of Genesis,
You created a fine new world.
You peopled it with splendid little creatures
made in your own image.
You wrote into their hearts
a longing to know you,
the God who had made them.
You gave them the sense of right and wrong.
You gave them the freedom to choose.
The very thing that can make you truly human.
Then soon you found these marvellous creatures
at each other’s throats,
hoarding and wasting the bounties of nature
as the mood struck them.
Would you not have lost patience
and simply let them scramble?!
You might.
But We have An Amazing Lord!

So He whispered into the hearts
    of men like Abraham, Moses & Elijah
    and of women like Sarah, Miriam and Ruth.
He recalled them to the God
who had made them.
In those Old Testament days a few of them listened
to those men and women of God.
But many ignored, scoffed or cursed them
or told them to go mind their own business.
You probably would have given them up then and there!
But We Have An Amazing Lord!

God said: I shall live among them:
    show my face,
    share their life, their troubles,
        their struggles,
even their death if necessary.
Surely if they can see me and touch me
they will listen to me,
and live in peace and joy with each other.
So God stepped in—
in the person of Jesus Christ.
These little creatures listened for awhile.
We Have an Amazing Lord

But soon they grew ugly,
spit at him and killed him.
Surely had you or I been God
that would have been the last straw.
*But We Have An Amazing Lord.*

God said: Now I will rise from the grave.
I will show myself alive to them.
No more should death terrorize them.
No more should they forget me.
No more should they doubt my love for them.
So God, in the person of Jesus Christ,
rose up from the grave.
I wonder whether you and I would have bothered.
*But We Have An Amazing Lord.*

Fifty days after Easter,
on the day of Pentecost,
when they were all together in one place:
Suddenly a sound came
like the rush of a mighty wind;
tongues of fire rested on each one of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.
The onlookers were amazed!
*Because We Have An Amazing Lord!*

We recognize this Amazing Lord
Not only in salvation history
but also in our history.

*Fifty Years of Lutheran Convergence*
is Norman Threinen's book\(^1\) on
the Ups and Downs
of Lutheran merger in Canada.

The Downs loomed large.
Sixty three years ago was a real Thumbs Down.
A layman called Stuermer
stimulated a merger movement.
He tried to consolidate the Lutherans in Western Canada,
and to hold a convention where only laity could vote.
But this merger movement was short-lived. Its opponents stopped it in 6 months!

For fifty years, 1922-1972, there were more Downs. Countless committees and commissions, countless papers and consultations, labored for Lutheran merger in Canada.

There was the three-way J.C.I.L.R., the Joint Commission on Inter-Lutheran Relationships laid to rest in the fall of 1977.

Then in the fall of 1978 was born the Lutheran Merger Commission. It, too, had its Ups and Downs.

I recall recessing one noon hour with an impasse so "impassible", it seemed like "Commission Impossible".

But all through the Downs there were persistent Ups.

Thirty one years ago, for example, in an article in the Canada Lutheran,2 Dr. Norman Berner expressed the dream of many East and West.

In his dream he saw himself being elected a delegate to a great gathering of Lutherans to plan a single Lutheran Church in Canada.

He wrote:
"In my dream I see the consecration of the Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada".

Thirty one years later here we are; here, too, is Norman Berner an elected delegate at this Constituting Convention. He was close on our Church’s name; He may get his archbishop some day.

Five years after Norm Berner’s dream, Twenty six years ago. 1959.
Dr. Ulrich Leupold presented his paper
“The Doctrine of the Church”
at a merger conversation.
In typical Leupold fashion he said:
Ultimately unity is found
not in human statements
but in Christ.
Now Dr. Leupold was never naive.
He knew the value of constitutions and statements.
They help us, as today’s scripture lesson says,
“to renounce disgraceful and underhanded ways”,
and “to make open statements of the truth”.

And the Truth is
We have this miracle of Merger
this miracle of Trust
Because We Have An Amazing Lord.

This Amazing Lord Amazed His People.
Our Gospel lesson says:
“And they were amazed”
“and they went out and fled from the tomb
trembling and astonished
and they said nothing to anyone,
for they were afraid.”
The young man in the white robe says:
Don’t be just amazed;
Become amazing!
Go tell his disciples and Peter.
Go back to Galilee.
Back to your congregation.
Back to your church.

We Have An Amazing Lord,
Therefore We Are His Amazing People
In our congregation
In our church.

The one most singularly significant happening
among merger commissioners these seven years
has been the growth of a sense of community.
Today’s Old Testament lesson
pictures *the church* as
the flock of the tender Shepherd
gathering the lambs in His arms
carrying them in His bosom
and gently leading grown ups.

We call our Church
The Body of Christ
the community of believers.
A genuine community
into which we can fit;
with freedom to find our identity
as a son or daughter of God;
with freedom to find our intimacy
as a brother or sister in Christ.
Where we are members one of another.
Where we bear one another's burdens.
Where we share one another's joys.

Tom Skinner says:
"The reason I need the fellowship of Christ's people
is because I have clay feet right up to my neck.
Sometimes I get lonely.
Sometimes my mind gets messed up.
Sometimes my feelings get up tight.
I fall down occasionally.
I need some brothers and sisters
who will throw their arms around me
when I get frustrated and fatigued."

Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan says:
"When I get up in the morning
I cannot always believe all of the Creeds.
But I find strength in knowing
I belong to a community of faith
which does believe."

But none of us is so naive as to think
that everything is always sunshine and roses
in our Christian community.
One of Flip Wilson’s routines has to do with a Black Preacher preparing to pass the offering plate. Flip would intone:

Now Brothers and Sisters
if this church is gonna progress,
it got to crawl.
Congregation: Let it crawl, Rev., let it crawl.
Flip: And after this church has crawled
it got to stand up and walk.
Congregation: Make it walk, Rev., make it walk.
Flip: And after this church has walked it’s got to run!
Congregation: Make it run, Rev., make it run.
Flip: And for this church to run
it’s gonna take MONEY!
Congregation: Let it crawl, Rev., let it crawl!

Many challenges face the new ELCIC.
Money is certainly one of them.

Our New ELCIC
Will not be all sunshine and roses.
People will smile with you and sometimes frown.
People will sing with you and sometimes weep.
People will rub elbows with you
sometimes the right
and sometimes the wrong way.
People will share with you their faith and doubt.
People will encourage you and sometimes discourage you.

But our crucial challenge is in
BECOMING:
Becoming what we already are in God’s eyes:
The flock of the Great Shepherd
The Body of Christ
The Community of Believers
The People of God.

In Becoming the People of God.
our Epistle reminds us,
we preach, not ourselves
but Jesus Christ as Lord,
with ourselves as servants.
"See how these Christians love one another"
was the amazing thing about the early Christians.

**We Have An Amazing Lord**

**We Are His Amazing People**
in our Church
but also in our *World*.

In our Old Testament lesson, Isaiah says:

- Get you up to a high mountain
- Herald of good tidings
- Lift up your voice with strength
- Herald of good tidings
- Lift it up
- Say to the world
- Behold your God.

**ELCIC, Herald of Good Tidings**

Through Canadian Missions
Through World Missions
Through the World Council of Churches
Through Lutheran World Federation
Through Colleges and Seminaries

Lift up your voice with Strength:

- Proclaim to every people, tongue and nation
- That God, in whom they live and move, is love.
- Tell how he stooped to save his lost creation
- and died on earth that we might live above.
- Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace,
- Tidings of Jesus, redemption and release.

**ELCIC, Herald of Good Tidings, Be Good News**

Through Canadian Lutheran World Relief
Through World Hunger Appeal
Through Church and Society
Feed the flocks like a Shepherd
We Have an Amazing Lord

gather the lambs in your arms
carry them in your bosom.
   The sixteen million refugees.
   the hopeless and helpless,
   the bleeding and starving
   in this world.
Not only through food and clothes,
not only through "Band Aid" help,
but also through help to improve
   their style and standard of life,
   their quantity and quality of life.
To care for them
not only in God's mercy,
but also in God's justice.
   We have no mission but to serve
In full obedience to our Lord,
To care for all, without reserve,
   And spread his liberating Word.

ELCIC, Herald of Good Tidings,
   Lift up your voice.
   Say to the world:
You Have An Amazing Lord!
You Are His Amazing People!
   So shall the Church at last be one.
   So shall God's will on earth be done,
   New lamps be lit, new tasks begun.
   Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Amen.

Notes
1 Norman J. Threinen, Fifty Years of Lutheran Convergence:
The Canadian Case-Study, Lutheran Historical Conference Publication No. 3 (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown, 1983).