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## LUTHERAN WITNESS

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### OUR LIVING FAITH

by Raymond L. Hartwig

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, clearly evidenced by the empty tomb, multiple witnesses, and a radical change in His disciples' behavior, is of infinite universal importance. It proves that Christ is the Son of God, that His doctrine is the truth, and that God the Father has accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world.

The resurrection of Christ is also of extreme importance to our own personal understanding and appreciation of God's plan for the world, a fact highlighted by the following little story.

A father and his child were walking down a country path. In the fields around them, summer flowers bloomed and countless bees buzzed. Suddenly, the serenity of the scene was shattered by the anxious cries of the child: "Father! Father! A bee! A bee! It's on my arm, and it's going to sting me!"

The father responds quickly. With a loving and reassuring smile, he brushes the bee away and calmly says: "It's all right. Don't worry. The bee can't hurt you. His stinger is gone. See? Look at my arm. He has already stung me."

With that, he wipes away the child's tears and tousles the child's hair. The serenity of their walk thus restored, they continue making their way down the path.

This can be a touching story, one that strikes a chord in any father who has shared quiet walks with his child and who has grown accustomed to handling emergencies along the way. But the story's applications don't necessarily stop at the relationship between a father and his child. In fact, the message of the story can apply to all of us, particularly when we see it in light of St. Paul's words in 1 Cor. 15:55-57, a passage in which he underscores the tremendous significance of Christ's resurrection for all people: "O death, where is

thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Suffice it to say that our path through

to our lives. We can find no haven from it, and we are likely to panic should it light on our arms.

Hymnist Hans Brorson captures our anxiety in such moments in his hymn, "I Walk in Danger all the Way" (LW 391).

How knowingly he writes in the third stanza:

"And death pursues me all the way,  
Nowhere I rest securely;  
He comes by night,  
He comes by day,  
He takes his prey most surely.

A failing breath, and I  
In death's strong grasp may lie  
To face eternity today  
As death pursues me all the way."

In his first letter to the people of Corinth, Paul analyzes for them and for us this fearsome situation, in which we inevitably find ourselves. He makes matters worse by informing us that we ourselves are responsible for what we are experiencing, the very sting of death being our sinfulness. It is this sinfulness that brings us under death's overwhelming power—sinfulness that in turn receives its power from God's Law as it reveals our sins and condemns us. Again, to quote the apostle: "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law."

What awesome, fatal power therefore resides in our many sins, our loveless thoughts, our misspoken words, our careless deeds—all prompted by the Prince of Death, fostered by an evil-ridden world, and all too often

readily owned by our own sinful nature. It is the constant presence of sin that results in death circling our lives all along life's path.

Martin Luther accurately captured this sorry condition of our earthly lives in stanza 1 of his hymn, "In the Midst of Earthly Life" (TLH 590). At the same time, he also turns our attention to the answer to what must be life's most serious question: "Who shall help us?"

*Like an enraged bee, death pursues our every step. But Easter reminds us that God's Son already has suffered its sting for us.*

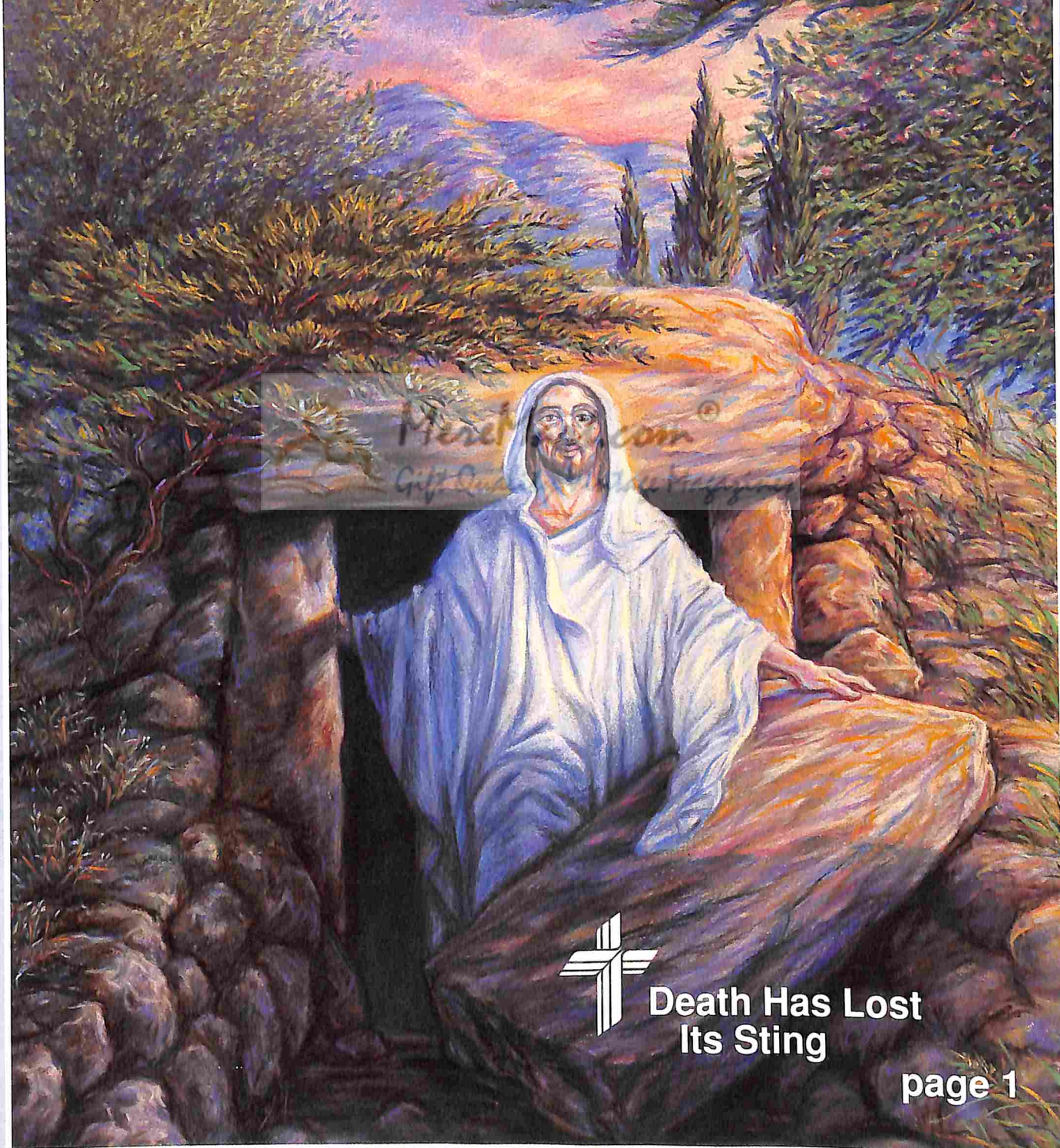
this world, like that in the story, is not always serene. That which is blooming can also be buzzing with much that can harm or disturb us. Chief among these disturbances is what Paul likens to a "sting," the sting of death. Like an enraged bee, death pursues us all along the way. It "stings" us at the loss of friends and loved ones. We feel its presence in close calls and threatening circumstances. We flail away at it in vain as it circles close

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# WITNESS



Death Has Lost  
Its Sting

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