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**MIGHTY VICTIM FROM THE SKY,
HELL'S FIERCE POW'RS BENEATH YOU LIE;
YOU HAVE CONQUERED IN THE FIGHT,
YOU HAVE BROUGHT US LIFE AND LIGHT.
ALLELUIA!**



A Victory to Live In

Alleluia! Christ is risen! This is our Easter greeting that we Lutherans are accustomed to. I have been teaching it to our preschool students, along with the idea that we live in the truth of Easter all year long. That's not a big stretch of the imagination for them. First of all, they have great imaginations and second, they are used to hearing, every day and in various ways, that Jesus washed away our sins by His work on the cross, gives us new life by His resurrection, and is our light in darkness and our friend in times of trouble.

For the rest of us, though, our imaginations have been constricted by all the things we already know, by our logic and reason, and by the harsh realities of every day life. It is not so easy for us, as adults, to see how we live in Easter all year long.

The picture on the previous page, sent to me by Pastor Schuldheisz, may help to prime the pump of our stagnated imaginations. Then, maybe the following will make sense:

On Good Friday almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ became the voluntary, innocent victim of the sin of the world (including our sins) and suffered the consequences that our sin begets - our suffering and death. Satan, our adversary, thought in this way he was cementing a victory that would condemn the pinnacle of God's creation, humankind, to the depths of hell, permanently separating us from God. Instead, on that Easter morning, Jesus rose from the dead, doing what we could never do, defeating sin, death, and Satan on our behalf, snatching us out of darkness, bringing us His life and light, securing for us eternal life and reuniting us in communion with God, our Heavenly Father.

So, what about the "living in Easter" thing? You should ask it this way: "What does this mean?" Well, it means that we (all of us who know Jesus and what He did) can now be God's own children, born again by water and the Holy Spirit and adopted by Baptism. And because of that, we now live under God in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as Jesus is risen from the dead, lives, and reigns to all eternity.

How can we sinners be righteous or innocent? We cannot love God with all our heart or love our neighbors as ourselves. Dear Christians, if Jesus died for the sins of the world, then how can those sins now count against us? And if our sins cannot be counted against us, then we are counted as righteous. And if we are righteous, then we are also counted as innocent.

This is the reality in which we should live. Every day we (and more often, if necessary) return to confess our sins to Him and He promises that He will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Of course He does! God has come to us in the flesh and died for our sins. Why would He NOT forgive them?

Living in this Easter reality, we get to start anew every day. We get a new life to start again afresh. We get to release our guilt, regret and pain. We are, in reality "born again!" Now we know our destination: eternal life with God. Now we can concentrate on loving our neighbor, not for our salvation, but for their good. Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!