

“Solar and Lunar”
Ephesians 2:1-10
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For centuries the moon has been connected to the strange and the dangerous.

Maybe it’s because we see the moon mostly at night - - in the dark.

Werewolves are said to come out at night - - during the full moon.

According to similar folklore - - vampires are healed by moonlight.

The word “loony” - - a derogatory term for the mentally ill - - is derived from the word “lunar” which refers to the moon. / And as recently as this year a prominent Senator referred to a member of the House of Representatives as “loony”.

If you grew up in the 1970s like I did you remember an album by Pink Floyd.

It is arguably the best rock album ever made. / It was the most popular.

“Dark Side of the Moon” contains a song called “Brain Damage”.

The original name for the song was “Lunatic”.

“The lunatic is on the grass, remembering games and daisy chains and laughs; Got to keep the loonies on the path. / And if the dam breaks open many years too soon - - and if there is no room upon the hill - - and if your head explodes with dark forebodings too - - I’ll see you on the dark side of the moon”

The song doesn’t say that in the case of these disasters, we will be abandoned or die.

We will be together - - but together on the dark side of the moon.

The band Pink Floyd didn’t mean disrespect to people with mental illness by their lyrics. In fact, they had a band member who inspired them. / Syd Barrett struggled with mental illness and his erratic behavior included starting to play a different tune in the middle of a concert performance.

“And if the band you’re in starts playing different tunes...

I’ll see you on the dark side of the moon” - - - is how their song describes it.

To put a more positive spin on it - - “Moonstruck” was a popular movie - - and the title is derived from the same word as “lunacy” or “of the moon”. / Apparently love - - can sometimes cause erratic behavior too.

Well - - if the moon is crazy - - the sun is kind of the opposite.

As in the Beatles’ song: “Good Day Sunshine”

People keep their sunny side up.

Or they have a sunny disposition.

And every morning the sun rises - - and a new day dawns.

And the sunrise - - has been connected to the resurrection for centuries.

That’s why some churches have a sunrise service on Easter morning.

So - - if the sun - - is the cheerful, optimist...

Then the moon - - is her crazy, erratic cousin.

I bring all this up because in the Bible - - in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians - - he writes about being raised up with Jesus in his resurrection. / Which sounds pretty good to me at first.

Believers who were dead in sin are said to be - - loved back to life by God!

Jesus resurrection not only raises Jesus - - WE are raised too - - according to Paul.

Which as I said - - sounds pretty good to me.

As Paul describes it he writes that we:

“...sit with Christ in the heavenly places”

So if that description holds - - it seems like it might be good to know a bit about - - the heavenly places. / Which were understood to have been populated by heavenly bodies - - like the moon and the sun.

Ephesians uses this imagery for the cosmos in Paul's description.

It's somewhat unique among Pauline letters.

Though Colossians has similar language.

In Colossians Paul wrote about:

Reconciling all things in earth and heaven.

And the firstborn of creation, heaven and earth, and so on...

But these two instances are considered different from much of the rest of Paul.

It is evocative imagery.

What do we make of this idea that - - being raised from the death of sin - - to life in God's love - - is like going from being loony - - to being sunny?

Well as you think about that - - let's look deeper into what Paul wrote.

In Ephesians chapter two Paul describes:

"The prince of the power of the air - -

the spirit who is at work in the sons of disobedience"

Well you don't have to be too great a scholar to guess that this refers to Satan.

"The prince of the power of the air" is considered a title for the Devil by scholars.

One of those being Professor Ralph Martin.

In Greek cosmology - - which influenced this time period and Paul's thinking - - in Greek cosmology - - there was a SPACE between the MOON and the EARTH. / And this space was a place for demonic activity. / It was where erratic spirits worked to disrupt people on earth.

Present day cosmology is different - - obviously.

But this is not about science - - or the solar system - - really.

It's about our psyche and our soul.

Paul was concerned about people who were like the walking dead because of their sins.

He wanted to offer hope - - for a better life.

Paul was convinced of God's great MERCY for us. / Mercy that led to love.

And love that healed - - and restored people who were in trouble.

SO who was Jesus - - according to Ephesians?

Jesus was OPPOSED to this "prince of the power of the air".

Jesus was an expression of God's merciful love.

Jesus was the one who was raised to life.

And we are raised with him.

The COSMOS is reconciled in God's love - - according to this vision from Paul.

It's an amazing vision - - and it's important to understand that for Paul - - there was a struggle to hope - - going on. / Human experience was divided - - into past and future. / And in the past there was a struggle - - but in the future there was HOPE.

Paul was likely in Rome - - 30 years after Jesus death when he wrote this.

He had been in and out of prison.

During this time - - there was increasing persecution of Jesus followers.

And - - there were struggles between Gnostics and Hebrews about the future of the faith.

The questions for Paul and his community were:

How can we still hope in the future?

How can we stand up to evil in the world?

If you have ever asked similar questions - - there might be something here for you.

There are so many things that can weigh us down.

There are so many things that can make us feel dead inside.

There seems to be corruption and dishonesty all around us.

So how can we stand up to these things?

That's what this letter is about!

And part of the answer is that - - ALONE we CAN'T really.

But we are NOT alone!

We are not asked to RAISE OURSELVES!!

We are RAISED - - by Christ.

That's one of Paul's central points here.

We can stand up and hope - - because we are raised up in love.

We can stand up - - IN HOPE!

Because - - we are RAISED up in God's LOVE.

I was thinking about this recently - - and I was struggling to understand the recent Wall Street - - "Game Stop" controversy. / As I understand it - - a bunch of little guys in the investment world - - tried to stand up to the big powers - - which they saw as corrupt and as hurtful to average every day people. / The problem is not new. / We saw it in PAY DAY loans and the housing crisis of 2008. / So much in our world seems so BIG and out of control.

And it's not just in the financial world.

Politics and culture have examples too.

If you are looking for a current day analogy for - - the "prince of power in the air" - - I'm pretty sure it would not be difficult to find.

It's enough to make us all go loony!

Or "loco" - - which is basically just Spanish for "crazy"

So loony - - or loco - - take your pick.

Speaking of which - - did anyone see the SNL sketch?

Pete Davidson and Ego Nwodim portrayed what it's like to go loco.

For them it was in response to the isolation of a year of COVID.

But whatever the cause - - maybe we can all relate...?

So - - how do we not all go LOCO?

Basically - - that's Paul's question in Ephesians.

And his answer is - - the resurrection.

Jesus lived on this earth - - and knows what it's like to be LOCO!

But that same Jesus - - raises us to new life!

Good life - - sane life - - hopeful life.

In response to Jesus action on our behalf - - then - - we are called to STAND UP!

We are raised up by God.

So we can stand up in our lives. / So we can stand up during difficult situations.

So we can stand up and hope.

The next time you look up onto the sky - - consider the moon and the sun.

And when you do - - remember the resurrection.

And give thanks. / And live in hope.

Amen.