

Written on Our Hearts

Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Romans 1: 18-23



You would be hard-pressed to find someone today that is unfamiliar with the Looney Tunes characters. Even though they are nearing 100 years old, they remain as well-known today as ever. Thanks to the work of Tex Avery, Friz Freleng, Chuck Jones and more, and featuring the voice talents of the great Mel Blanc, Looney Tunes produced characters and stories and gags that would be loved for generations.

A little known fact: the name Looney Tunes was a spoof of the Walt Disney series of cartoons called Silly Symphonies. And if you look at each word of each title, you can see it plainly. Looney instead of Silly, and Tunes (as in, music) instead of Symphonies. And it's actually why Tunes is spelled the way it is when you think it should be spelled T-O-O-N-S, as in short for "cartoons."

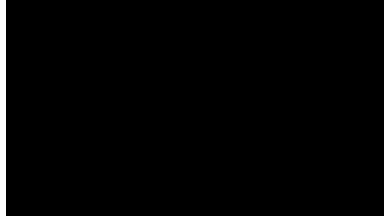


That little nugget of knowledge is neither here nor there, but I tell you all this because I want to show you a clip from a Looney Tunes short this morning. It's from the 1948 episode called "Scaredy Cat," featuring Sylvester the Cat and Porky Pig. We're going to basically see the very end of the cartoon, so allow me to catch you up.

Porky Pig is settling down for bedtime, but he's having a rather terrible experience getting his cat Sylvester to do the same. He doesn't want Sylvester in his bed, so he continually tries to kick Sylvester out of the room. Anyone with pets at home probably knows this feeling.

But Sylvester the Cat is absolutely terrified of the mice in Porky's house. Right off the bat, it sounds funny...a cat deathly afraid of mice! But you quickly see that Sylvester has a very good reason to be afraid of these mice. They are murderous little things, and they're actively trying to do some major harm to Sylvester and Porky.

Porky, of course, doesn't believe Sylvester has any good reason to be afraid, so he continually gets frustrated and angry with Sylvester. This goes on and on through all the crazy situations you would imagine from a Looney Tunes cartoon, and it finally ends with Porky having enough of Sylvester's antics. Let's pick it up here and see what happens with Porky and Sylvester:



So Sylvester ends up being right, and then he has to overcome his fear and save the day. Or save the night, I guess.

I showed you this episode because it contains one of those recurring gags we see in so many cartoons. As Sylvester is sitting outside alone, he's suddenly confronted by an angelic figure of himself telling him what he should do.

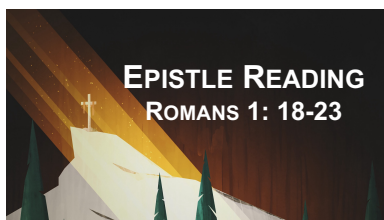
As per usual with this gag, you see a smaller duplicate version of the character in question, in this case Sylvester. Usually, they appear on the character's shoulder, whispering in their ear. It's done that way because it's meant to represent the voices we have inside our heads that tell us right from wrong. It's a visible representation of what we all know of as a conscience.

I want to talk about this phenomenon of conscience today, this innate knowing of right and wrong. But I'm not here to tell you to listen to angel on your shoulder and try do the right thing. I hope that part goes without saying.

Instead, I want to talk about the fact that this natural imprint of a moral compass is actually a reflection of God. If you want to take that a step further, I would say it's proof of the existence of our Creator. And then, we'll end by examining what this all means for us as Christians.

Let's start off by examining the fact that us having this moral imprint is a very Biblical concept.

Our Old Testament reading from Jeremiah quotes the Lord telling us that He put His law in our minds and wrote it on our hearts. Just a beautiful verse, one telling us that God has imprinted His law on each of us.



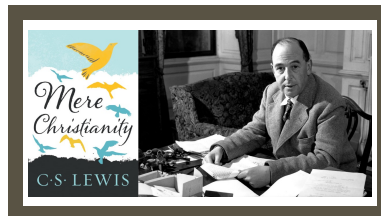
Romans 1, verses 18-23, tell us something similar. Let's read those words together:

¹⁸ *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

²¹ *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.*



What we know about God, about His nature, about His desire for His creation – we know all of that because God has made it plain to us. From the beginning of time, God has made these things seen, so that we know the difference between goodness and godlessness. We know the difference between righteousness and wickedness. We know the difference between light and dark, right and wrong.



My favorite theologian, C.S. Lewis, wrote one of my favorite theological books, *Mere Christianity*. I have mentioned this before, and I'm sure I'll mention it again. It was, and continues to be, a valuable work I keep coming back to as I learn more about my own faith.

Actually, I had to avoid just reading the first five chapters of that book to you this morning. But since I don't want to make this story time with Pastor Adam, and since it would be rather lazy of me, here's the essence of what he says.

In the world around us, there are laws of nature that we cannot ignore. There's a law of gravity that we must obey. We can't choose to start floating or jump 30 feet in the air. There are laws of biology that govern organisms and creatures, and we can't just decide to grow a third eye.

But humans have another law, and it's one that's not really present in the rest of nature. We have a law that Lewis calls the Moral Law. In other words, we know right from wrong. But unlike any of the other laws, we are actually able to choose whether or not we follow this one.

We can choose to help someone. We can choose to put ourselves at risk for the good of someone else. If we were only wired with natural laws like we see in the rest of nature, with survival of the fittest, with getting everything we need to make us stronger, that “for the greater good” notion wouldn’t be a part us.

Yet it is. There is something that compels us to do the right thing, not just for ourselves, but for others.

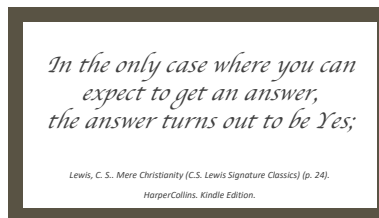
So we have this moral code that is wired into us, that we can choose to follow or not, and that is unique to humans as opposed to any other part of creation. How do we know that can only come from a Creator, from God? How do we know we didn’t just develop it on our own?

While I said I wasn’t going to read you a whole five chapters of *Mere Christianity* today, I never said anything about an excerpt. That might have been a little sneaky, but my conscience is clear about it!

Lewis goes on to talk about the fact that our moral code is actually strong evidence of a Power outside our universe that set this all into motion. He likens it to an architect building a house, but I like to think of it more like a sandcastle.

Think of yourself on a beach, building a sandcastle. You’ve created a wonderful thing and you have your own personal touches all throughout. But you don’t actually end up living *in* your sandcastle. You remain outside it.

Lewis argues this is also how we should expect a Creator God to act. And then, he says our morality is our arrow that points to the existence of that God. He says:



The only way in which we could expect [a Creator] to show itself would be inside ourselves as an influence or a command trying to get us to behave in a certain way. And that is just what we do find inside ourselves. Surely this ought to arouse our suspicions? In the only case where you can expect to get an answer, the answer turns out to be Yes;

Lewis, C. S.. Mere Christianity (C.S. Lewis Signature Classics) (p. 24). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

What it boils down to is this: if there is a Creator that exists primarily outside our universe, wouldn’t we expect that Creator to give His creation some direction on how He wants it to operate? The answer to that is yes, and that’s exactly what we find.

I think this is a fascinating way to look at the universe, arriving at this conclusion that this is all the unmistakable signature of our Creator. It also carries some major implications for how we carry out our daily lives.



It has implications on how we live because it should affect how we act when we know we've done wrong. It should affect how we respond when that still, small voice tells us what to do.

When's the last time your conscience told you that you needed to do what you didn't really feel like doing, maybe even actively didn't want to do? Did you grumble? Did you put it off? Did you even ignore it and hope it would go away?

How would that have changed if you had thought in the moment that what you were feeling was the direct result of God's desire for your life?

I think it would at least give me pause if I would start to drag my feet, or even complain, when it's time to do the right thing. I think it should even give us joy to do the right thing when the Holy Spirit starts stirring us to action.

When you think of the fact that we have been set apart from the rest of creation to have this moral compass, when you think of this indelible mark our Creator has placed on us, then all of a sudden, doing the right thing isn't so much of a burden.

It may not be that we have an angel on our shoulder. We might not have a miniature version of ourselves that pops up during a tough time or a difficult situation and whispers in our ear what we need to do.

Personally, I don't need a mini me popping in and out like that. I hardly think you all would want that, either.

What we do get is so much more meaningful. We have been marked by our Creator to know what He desires of us. He has given us the Holy Spirit as our guide, and he's set us into communities of faith to help us discern when we still aren't sure what to do.

What this all amounts to – our conscience, our moral code, all of it – is really a God that has set us apart. It amounts to a God that has written His law on our hearts.

And all of God's people said...