

One of my favorite movies is the 2006 movie *Stranger than Fiction*. It stars Will Ferrell as Harold Crick, a disciplined solitary IRS agent who is given the task of auditing a baker named Ana Pascal. Harold then begins hearing the disembodied voice of a woman narrating his life.

Harold is alarmed when this disembodied narrator mentions that he will soon die. Harold wants to contact the author and convince her not to kill him. To aid in this quest, Harold reaches out to a professor of literature named Jules Hilbert. But Jules tells Harold that before they seek to find the author, they need to find the genre of the story. Professor Hilbert states: “The last thing to determine conclusively is whether you're in a comedy or a tragedy. To quote Italo Calvino, “The ultimate meaning to which all stories refer has two faces: the continuity of life, the inevitability of death.” Tragedy, you die. Comedy, you get hitched.”

Why are you here today? Perhaps you’re here because you always go to church on Easter. Perhaps you’re here because you’ve been gone from church a long while and you’re ready to be back. Perhaps you’re here because somebody dragged you here. Perhaps you’re here for the first time and are just testing the waters. Whatever the reason may be, we’re happy you’re here. Welcome to Faith Lutheran Church.

Why are you here today? I’m guessing all of us have in some way wondered about this question that Professor Hilbert asks of Harold’s life, namely, “If my life is a story, is it a comedy or a tragedy? Will it have a happy ending or a sad ending? Does my life have any meaning, or is it just one thing after another then I die?”

And so we ask, is my life a comedy or a tragedy? Will it have a happy ending or a sad one? 2. Our five senses tell us life is a tragedy. Turn on the evening news with the latest updates on the War in Ukraine or the latest shooting. How often is our life marred by sickness, depression, and anxiety? How many friends and family have we lost to disagreements, distance, or death?

Our Old Testament text speaks to these big questions. Job is the speaker in today’s text. As you start to read through the Book of Job, you would get the impression that it was a tragedy. God boasts to Satan that Job is “**a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil.**” Satan tells God that Job is that way only because God has given Job every advantage. Thus, Satan places a bet with God: let me take away all that he has, then he’ll curse God to His face.

Satan takes away Job’s livestock and property. He kills Job’s sons and daughters. He afflicts Job with loathsome sores from head to foot. If that wasn’t bad enough, Job is surrounded by friends who launch an investigation to see what Job did wrong to deserve these bad things happening.

It is in this context that Job replies to his friends saying, “**“If indeed you magnify yourselves against me and make my disgrace an argument against**

me, know then that God has put me in the wrong and closed his net about me. Behold, I cry out, ‘Violence!’ but I am not answered; I call for help, but there is no justice. He has walled up my way, so that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness upon my paths.... He has kindled his wrath against me and counts me as his adversary.”

From Job’s point of view, it would seem as though God was the villain. He was a mysterious figure who seemed to have caused Job’s tragedy. Even when God does appear on the scene, it is in the whirlwind and he essentially intimidates Job into humility and submission. What kind of God could this be?

Have you been mad at God? Mad because you felt He was a villain rather than a loving Father. Mad because He could have stepped in to fix that problem. Mad because things aren’t the way they should be. Mad—maybe just because you don’t know why—mad from years of deep hurts, pains, and betrayals. If so, sit with Job, he knows what that feels like.

Yet we see hope shine through the clouds of Job’s darkest hour. Indeed, we see the faith and the faithfulness of Job who despite his hardships and calamities proclaims in our text, **“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!”** He might have been upset with God, but we do see that’s not where Job remained. Job does come around.

Job saw through his present circumstances and believed his life would have a happy ending. He believed that his life was a comedy, not a tragedy. It was born out of the conviction, “My Redeemer Lives!” So too, 1. When Christians shout: "My Redeemer Lives," they proclaim life is a story with a happy ending.

I’m not going to spoil the end of *Stranger than Fiction* for you. You can watch the movie for yourself to see if it ends in tragedy or comedy. But suffice it to say that the tension in that movie hinges around meeting the author of his story and from there determining whether she would be the type to write tragedies or comedies.

Unlike Harold Crick in *Stranger Than Fiction*, we don’t need to wonder who the author of our story is. Despite Job’s low moments, Job knew who that was. Even despite our low moments, we know who that is! Knowing the author tells us whether we can expect our story to be a comedy or a tragedy.

The great mystery is that there is indeed a loving God even in a world of wars, death, and tragedy. The God in the book of Job who Job at times calls his adversary. The God in the book of Job who appears to Job in the whirlwind and howls at Job saying he doesn’t know what he’s talking about. This is the same God who reveals Himself in the person of Jesus Christ who is our Redeemer. Jesus

Christ forgives sinners like you and me, loves unconditionally, and His coming kingdom is one of healing, hope, and new life.

For the followers of Jesus, Jesus' story seemingly ended in tragedy. Jesus was betrayed, arrested, tortured, and killed. Their fearless leader was placed into the grave. The disciples were reduced to scattering and hiding, worried that they'd be next on the menu. A follower of Jesus reflects on His suffering and death saying, "**We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.**" They had hoped that this Jesus would be the Redeemer spoken of by Job.

Their hopes were not disappointed. Jesus' story did not end in the tragedy of death, but the joyous comedy of life everlasting. The Easter truth is "My Redeemer Lives!" Death could not keep the Lord of Life and Jesus burst from the tomb. His resurrection transformed the lives of His followers and started a movement that continues to this day. The Easter proclamation of Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed, alleluia! Has rung through the centuries and now reverberates throughout churches throughout the world on this day.

Is my life a comedy or a tragedy? Does it have a happy or a sad ending? "My Redeemer Lives!" means unequivocally that your life is a comedy, not a tragedy. It has a happy ending, not a sad one because Jesus is *your* redeemer who rescues you in your sorry state and gives you meaning, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. When God, the Author of Life, raised Jesus from the dead, He showed us His character by not abandoning His creation to death, decay, and sin. Satan does not win. Life wins. Forgiveness wins. Hope wins.

What this means is that your Redeemer will raise you on the last day to be reunited with loved ones who have died in the faith. Your Redeemer will wipe away every tear from your eyes. Your Redeemer is preparing a place for you in a world without sin, death, and sorrow. Your Redeemer will right all wrongs and will rescue your life's tragedies with sadness and disappointments and turn them into comedies with happy endings and hopes restored.

"My Redeemer Lives" is a proclamation of hope even despite all outward appearances. Because your Redeemer lives, life is not a tragedy. It is not meaningless. Life is a comedy, but it's not in the comedy in the sense that life is a joke or a farce. Life is a comedy in that we know all things will be made right—even with mishaps and disasters along the way. Life has a happy ending. And in the between—that even despite all sorts of seemingly insurmountable obstacles and sorrows, there is a loving God hiding behind conflict and difficulty.

This morning, God calls us to the faith and faithfulness of Job. He calls us to look beyond our current circumstances and trust Him. We know the author! If the Father didn't abandon Jesus to death, He won't abandon us either.

That's why we keep on gathering Sunday after Sunday. Every Sunday is a mini-Easter. Every Sunday is a chance to hear again the story of Jesus' death and

resurrection and how we fit into it. Every Sunday is chance to remind ourselves that we have been grafted into God's story. And God's story never ends in tragedy even if it takes twist and turns. God's story is one of joy and laughter, hope and resilience even in the face of tragedy. Every Sunday is a chance to cast our anxieties, fears, and even anger on God because He is big enough to handle them.

The story of Job had a happy ending. It was a comedy in that sense. He was restored twofold for what he lost. And **EASTER TELLS CHRISTIANS THAT WE LIVE IN A STORY WITH A HAPPY ENDING.** We as Christians have the promise from Christ Himself that whatever we lose in this life, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. All of this because My Redeemer Lives. Rejoice dear Christian friends, Christ is Risen!