

When Redemption Rules

by Stewart Ruch

Living without fear is possible through faith in a Redeemer and immersing ourselves in the story of God.

Duration: 28:01

Scripture: Ruth 4:14

Topics: "Redemption"

Description

The sermon transcript emphasizes the importance of immersing oneself in the story of God as told in the Bible in order to live without fear. The speaker draws a parallel to the success of Pixar Studios, stating that their belief in the power of storytelling has led to their empire. The transcript encourages readers to read and study their Bibles regularly, comparing the impact of engaging with God's story to getting caught up in a weekly sitcom. Ultimately, the message emphasizes the transformative power of God's story and the need to constantly see oneself as a part of it.

Transcript

Depending on what copy or edition you might have, there are about a thousand pages in the Bible. And within these thousand pages, there are eight accounts of men, of women, and of children being literally raised from the dead. Historical accounts where a child or a man or a woman were verified as biologically dead, and not just in the ministry of Jesus, but in the ministry of others as well, literally raised from the dead.

In America, we have a kind of near-death genre where people have experiences and they come back and write or talk about what they experienced when they died in an operating room table or died in an ER. I'm personally aware in contemporary times of at least a few instances where there has been a verifiable person literally raised from the dead. I'm aware of one in Europe.

I'm aware of a couple in Africa where I have had the privilege of traveling. There's one account that is perhaps the most riveting for me and for Catherine. It occurred in the country where she grew up, in the country of Brazil.

There was a renowned Bible scholar there who is known for his incredible scholarship, for sort of his sober way of coming at the importance of the Bible. He's a highly detailed, highly sort of rational-based leader and professor and scholar there in Brazil. And he came to Catherine and me and said, I want you to watch this video of a man whom I've met who has the story that he was raised from the dead.

And I'll just never forget what God did to my own thinking and my own heart as I watched this account of this Brazilian share about being raised from the dead by God. He actually had a drug overdose. He was somebody who had known about God.

His mother was somebody who prayed regularly for him to know God. He had a pastor. His mother had a pastor.

When he died, his mother was, as any mother would be, of course, just shattered but confused because she'd had such a strong sense, as many mothers might, that this son could make such a contribution to the work and the life of God. And she got the pastor and actually asked him. This is not totally uncommon in Brazilian church customs to go to the morgue and to have a prayer meeting in the morgue and for him to pray for her.

And as they were there, literally in the morgue where the body was prior to a burial, which happens very, very quickly in Brazil, within 24 hours, to their absolute shock and amazement, the body moved and took a gasp of air and returned to life. He shares that when he died, he was aware that there were figures that were menacing and not welcoming to him and that Jesus appeared to him, said to these figures, he's mine. And then with this graphic encounter of Jesus, he, to him, awakened.

To those in the morgue, came back to life. Someone asked him the question, so what's changed for you after you've been raised from the dead? Good question. I mean, what's different for you now that you've died and come back to life? And he said, I'm not afraid.

I'm honestly not afraid of anything. I know exactly where I'm going. He's given his life to work in some of the most violent slums in Rio de Janeiro, called favelas, where terror and horror and violence are regular happenstance.

Okay, now I understand that right now you may be trying to get your head around, is this possible? Was it true? Was it a lie? Was it fabricated? Just getting your head around this guy being raised from the dead. I appreciate that. But if I could take another step and just push a little bit further, even though that's an amazing story and one that has to be thought through, I believe it utterly verifiable and true.

Maybe in some ways, it's even more amazing to imagine what it'd be like to live without fear. I mean, is that possible? Would it be possible to live without a sense of fear, without a sense of anxiety, without ever kind of present companion that's always there, that I don't know what's going to happen here, or I'm afraid of this, or I'm anxious about this circumstance. To imagine that actually lifting from your life, to even imagine taking one step closer to living without fear is for many of us almost impossible to imagine.

And I would not have the confidence to come to you as a pastor and as a teacher if I was coming to you based on just this one remarkable story of a man in Brazil. But the crisis that it puts me in, or the kind of challenge it puts me in, is it's not just this man, but it's actually throughout the pages of the Bible, that not only are the dead raised, but even more profoundly, every single person who lives their life in God is called to live a life without fear. That what we've seen in the book of Ruth is actually her heroine, we ultimately see two heroines, Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi, and a hero, Boaz, all who are operating in their lives without the prevalence, or the domination, or the oppression of fear.

And it's not just in Ruth. We have one crisis, tragedy, story after another told in the Bible, where in the midst of that crisis, after that crisis, figure after figure come through it, or in the middle of it, living without

fear. Ruth is a short story, another story called Job, that's a novel about this same theme.

Paul in the New Testament, the last third of your Bible, talks about shipwreck, torture, abandonment of closest friends and colleagues, and yet testifies that he's able to live his life without it being marked, or controlled, or influenced regularly by fear. Here's what I want for us today. Here's what I want for myself today.

I'd like us, based on the teaching of the Bible, based on Jesus, to take at least one step toward living without fear. Because the Bible teaches that we can do that. It's okay if you can't imagine that.

It's okay if you've never lived that way. Because the strength, and the ability, and the power to do so is beyond you. It's based in an openness to God, who holds our future utterly in his hands, and has told us, has told us, ultimately, our future.

Okay, so we read lots of sentences, beautifully read by Bethany. So go to the bulletin. Let me just highlight a couple that we're going to focus on.

As we look at the life of Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, this call to live without fear. If I have to give you just a couple of verses, just to focus where we're going, it would be in the last chapter, chapter four. And in chapter four, verse 14, some women of the community say to Naomi, the mother-in-law of Ruth, blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day without a Redeemer.

Okay, that's one of our central sentences or phrases in this whole passage, and for our today's teaching. Blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day without a Redeemer. And the first part of verse 15, he shall be to you a restorer of life.

Let's start with living without fear. One thing I absolutely love about these a thousand pages is just how incredibly real and honest and transparent they are about the life that we're all living. So real and transparent that at times it's almost hard to read, because it highlights, rather than trying to create a particular kind of perfect vision of a life with God in which everything will always be okay, every day will be amazing and wonderful.

Instead, what it does is it paints real life, real life that is punctuated by crisis or tragedy or incredible loss. That is throughout the pages of the Bible. Indeed, this whole story started with a crisis of kind of unimaginable proportions, particularly for Naomi, who loses, it appears, within a short period of time, not just her husband, which you would spend your life recovering from, but she then loses both of her sons.

This is the kind of trauma that for some people, they'll never get out of bed again. I mean, they'll never have a productive day in their life again. This is just so unimaginable, and the Bible starts this story with that reality, as if to say so clearly, I know.

As if God is saying to the pages of the Bible, I know. I know there's loss. I know there's unspeakable tragedy and crisis.

I know that. That, for me, allows me to teach the Bible. That, for me, is what allows me to pastor, because I know.

I know my own life and the profound disappointments Catherine and I have, but more than that, I know many of your lives. You've had, Naomi, Ruth experiences. You've had marriages that utterly destructed.

You've had financial issues, year upon year upon year, that has exhausted you. You have health debilitating realities. Just don't go away.

Now, how am I going to pastor you, and how am I going to have the boldness to say, based on the Bible, live without fear? Unless, first and foremost, the Bible is really clear, there are fear-inspiring events all the time, and if you're not in those situations right now, well, let's be honest, you're afraid they're coming, right? You're afraid that right now you've got an easy season or an okay season, but the other shoe's going to drop and it's going to end. The Bible is utterly clear about the reality of challenge in our lives. So, how do we interact with this image from last week? Last week, I talked about an image in Ruth where it talks about coming under God's wing.

Boaz says, Ruth, you come under God's wing. It's a place of refuge, which is exactly what Ruth has done, which is exactly what we do when we live our lives in God's story. But how do we square that with the fact that even though you come under God's wing and you're in your place of refuge, Naomi was under God's wing.

She loved God and she lost her husband and two sons. How do we square that? How do we make that work? That is a really important question. I've answered that question several times in my life.

I've gone back to the Bible. I've gone back to the story of the church. I've worked it through, but you know, when it comes up again, like it has and reflecting on many of your lives and what you all are facing, I've got to be honest.

I had to answer it again. I've been wrestling with it all week. What am I going to say? I mean, yes, come under the refuge of the wing, but then you're under the refuge and it still looks scary.

How can I teach to live without fear? I was so helped by a psalm that talks about the wing of the Lord as well. Psalm 91. It talks about coming under the wing of the Lord.

It uses the same image in Psalm 91. It's a beautiful psalm. Here's why it's so beautiful.

Because in a poetic conciseness, in one verse it talks about being under the wing of the Lord, and in the next verse it says, the arrows that fly by day, you will not fear. Okay, what is that saying? And what is Ruth saying? It's saying that arrows still fly. It's saying that a pestilence, that's another phrase that's used in Psalm 91, a pestilence, fear, things that come will still come at night.

These things still happen. If you come under the refuge of the wing of the Lord, it does not mean that arrows aren't still flying, but what it means is that in the refuge of the Lord, you need not be afraid. What it means is the Christian actually has the power given to them by the Lord to live a life without fear, or at least a step toward a life without fear, or at least a life that's influenced by fear, and shaped by fear, and determined by fear.

That's exactly what the book of Ruth is saying. That is exactly what the Bible teaches. The arrows come.

The arrows fly by day. There are still so many things that are happening, but because of Jesus and the way his story plays out, we actually don't have to be afraid of the arrows that fly. How do we do this? How do we live without fear? Well, first thing we see in Ruth, who is a fearless heroine, is that she believes there is a Redeemer.

She believes there is one who can redeem her. Now, in the story, it's played out in another human person, Boaz. This is a really interesting scene in chapter three, very unusual scene for ancient Near Eastern practice.

What Ruth is doing, and what appears to be some bizarre stuff, she's sleeping on the threshing floor. How many of us have been to an ancient Near Eastern threshing floor? She's going to the threshing floor. She takes Boaz's cover and uncovers his feet.

Then she takes a nap by his feet. She falls asleep there. What is happening? She does all this, by the way, not on her own.

She does this encouraged by her mother in God, who would be Naomi. What she's doing, essentially, is saying, if you'd be open to marrying me, Boaz, I would like to marry you. This decision, this risk, this kind of fearless stepping out, is compounded by the fact that almost all women would go for someone much younger, who they have a much longer chance of being protected by and living under their wing.

Boaz is clearly older. So she's acting with a kind of fearlessness that is unimaginable in ancient Near Eastern culture as an immigrant, as a woman in a culture that is not releasing of women or honoring of women coming into this place. What has driven this fearlessness? She knows that there is a Redeemer.

Now in the story, what that means is that in extended Israelite families, the understanding was if something of crisis happened in a family, there would be a family member, often like an auntie or an uncle or somebody in the family that was responsible to help protect and take care of the people that have hit crisis. They were called a Redeemer or a Redeemer family member. It was a phrase that was used.

And she believes, she trusts, she has faith that Boaz will be that Redeemer, that he will step in at the very least to provide financially. But she actually goes to even greater fearlessness and essentially, in an indirect way, under Naomi's direction, proposes a kind of potential marriage covenant with Boaz. Fearlessness.

How could she do that? Because she releases the rights of her story to the story of a Redeemer. She actually believes and trusts that there is a Redeemer. Now Boaz is the ancestor of Jesus himself.

And for us, that ancient Israelite custom no longer pertains, but it's faint and only an echo of what Jesus, our Redeemer, has given to us so that we can live without fear. There's a beautiful, beautiful quote from a woman named Amy Carmichael. She was a missionary to India in the early 20th century.

Very, very fruitful ministry, actually rescuing children from the margins of society She's a great figure for us at Rez who have a deep passion to be out in DuPage County and in the nations with the ministry of children. She's incredibly fruitful, but at the end of her life, she has an accident, she falls into a long disease, she's bedridden after years of productivity, and in the midst of that crisis, in the midst of arrows flying by day, she wrote this, joys are always on their way to us. Joys are always on their way to us.

They're always traveling to us in the darkest of nights. There is never a night, there is never a night where they are not coming. She believes in a Redeemer who is the author of her life.

How do we think that way? How do we get ourselves living that way? How do we enter into this belief in a Redeemer? Ed Catmull, you may know his name, he is one of the co-founders of Pixar Studios and they have been responsible for telling some of the great sort of movie stories of the last 20 plus years. So from

Toy Story to Inside Out, they have sort of dominated the film market and particularly of storytelling and animated storytelling. Ed Catmull says that the kind of secret to their success and to their amazing sort of empire that they've built is not a technological prowess and innovation they've shown, they've shown that, it would not be his own leadership which is rather stunning in the multi-billion dollar industry that he leads.

He sold his company for seven billion to Disney. He would actually say, no, no, no, no, no. What makes us what we are is story, that we believe in story.

As a matter of fact, Ed Catmull says, we believe that stories can change the world. Now Ed Catmull has this vision for stories. How much more so should we be that have the story of God given to us in the Bible? If we're to live without fear, we have to immerse ourselves in the story of God.

What I'm saying very plainly is we have to read our Bibles, we have to study our Bibles, we need this Bible all the time, five minutes in your day if nothing else, 50 minutes, whatever it might be, we have to be literally immersed constantly seeing ourselves in the larger story of this Bible. Brothers and sisters, if the one who brought us Toy Story can be so enthusiastic and have so much faith in the power of story, can we not even more so who have God's story? I'll take God's story over Toy Story any day. This is the story that is called to utterly influence our actions.

You know how it is when you get caught up on a weekly sitcom or program and you begin to think about yourself in the life of that story, it's so engaging, so incentivating. If you're honest, you can imagine yourself kind of walking down the hallways with those people or hanging out with those people or living your life with those people and begin to kind of imagine your life as part of those people. That's exactly how it's supposed to work with the Bible.

It's coming into that story, living in that story, knowing that story, digesting that story, studying that story. That is the only way to begin to live without fear. And I suspect, and I can chart it my own life, that my fearfulness can be gauged by just how immersed I am in this story.

And when we're in this story, we're then given the vision, the openness to understand how this story finishes. We're given faith in the future God has already won. Look how the story of Ruth finishes.

It's such a beautiful ending. There's a wedding, then there's a baby, and then there's grandma with the baby. And they lived happily ever after.

You know that phrase from fairy tales? You know how that plays out in so many successful movies and stories? And they lived happily ever after. Ruth is actually referred to in kind of literary circles as what would be called a comedy. Not because of the laugh track and it's cracking you up all the time, but actually comedy has a broader meaning than that.

And comedy has to do with stories that end with life. So Shakespeare comedies always end with a marriage, often end with a birth. You'll see it in Greek comedy as well.

There's something new that's happening. As a matter of fact, the way Ruth finishes is with life, which isn't a finish at all, it's actually a beginning. So Ruth's life may come to an end, but she's a small, small part in which she finds her greater significance in the great story of God.

Her story doesn't finish, it actually goes to Obed. And Obed is grandfather to David. And David is great-great-grandfather all the way to Jesus.

And then we're brought to Jesus. And then we see Jesus's story. But Jesus's story has a finish as well.

It's a finish. It is the ultimate in the comedic. It's the ultimate in life.

Because in Jesus's story, in the same way that we as the reader that can read the book of Ruth and go, great, I know how it ends. It ends happily ever after. I love stories like that.

Do you understand that you as a reader, you as a Christian, are also brought into the complete story of God, which finishes and therefore begins with the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Do you know that the whole idea of happily ever after is completely and utterly true in God? The one reason why so many stories rotate around that is not because it's just a nice way to finish, but it's actually capturing an eternal reality. It ends with Jesus conquering death. It's His life that we are given in the resurrection.

That's how the story finishes. And that's exactly how our stories begin. And that, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the power of Jesus overcoming the grave, and then taking that power, taking that new life, and putting it in every human being that gives their life story to God's story.

That's how it finishes. And that, and that alone, and that as the great story of the Bible, is what frees us to live without fear. It gives us a supernatural vision for living, where we're living in a life that is greater than this life around us.

It's more powerful than this life. It's more influential than this life. It's more freeing than this life.

It's the life of Jesus. He who raised Jesus from the dead, the Father in the heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is given this life. There's yet another crisis story.

It's another tragedy story. Jesus comes to the death of one of His closest friends. He's talking to the sister who just lost her brother of His friend.

Now, He's going to raise this man from the dead. His name is Lazarus. But before He does that, He just looks the sister in the eye, and He says, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in Me will never die. Do you believe it? Do you believe there is a Redeemer who is resurrected from the grave and takes that life through the Bible, through holy communion with Him, and literally gives it to us to free us from fear? I had just gotten home from a Sunday afternoon meetings and services and was getting ready for the rest of the evening. I was upstairs.

Catherine ran into the room. Christian can't breathe. Christian's our number four.

Christian can't breathe. I don't even hear what she's saying anymore. I just hear that he can't breathe.

I'm dressed in trousers, sandals, an old t-shirt. I pick up my son. I run to the car.

I throw him in the back of the car, and I drive on Geneva Road as fast as I can to CDH. Christian can't breathe. He can't breathe in the back seat.

He can't breathe. All this stuff is going through my head. What am I going to do? I mean, arrows are flying by day.

How am I going to respond? I'm honestly up against the wall, and I just start doing what was taught in the Bible. I start to pray in the Spirit. I can't make sentences.

My punctuation is no good. I can't think clearly. I'm just praying in the Spirit.

I'm praying with my intuition, with my spirit to the Holy Spirit. I'm asking Him to come. As I'm doing that, it's slow, but it's coming.

He's coming. He's there. He's in the car.

He's right here. Christian, He's right here. Jesus is right here.

I don't know what's going to happen. I can't promise Him He's going to be okay. I don't know what's going to happen to Him, but I know something.

I know something. I know that God is in that car. I know He's entered in right next to us.

I know that. I know that the life of Jesus is there. I know that.

Thanks be to God, He got to the ER. They gave him a breathing treatment. He was better.

It's happened since then again, though, but I know how this story finishes, and I know then how the story begins. A woman theologian and mystic of the church in the late 1300s, Julian of Norwich, in midst of her own crisis, wrote this, All shall be well. All shall be well.

In all manner of things shall be well. In Jesus. In the resurrection.

With the author and finisher of our faith. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28803.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/stewart-ruch/when-redemption-rules/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net