

Corn mazes are harder to do in Oklahoma. Corn doesn't grow as widespread here. But you can find some; one is just an hour or so west of here near Weatherford at P Bar Farms. A maze with 95 decision points, 3.5 miles of twists and turns, and paths all cut in a field of corn. The whole idea of a corn maze is to keep you guessing, lost going one way and lost going the other. And when night falls a corn maze is almost impossible.

Satan can make this world feel like a giant maze. His temptations make us go one way and get lost or go a different way and get just as lost. Our sins are just fuel for Satan to drive us deeper into despair, like being lost in a dark maze we can't escape from. Every cruel twist and turn of life threatens to keep us guessing without certainty forever. So lost are we at times that it can feel like Satan and all those working with him are succeeding in stamping out and hushing us forever.

If only there was someone above the maze that could guide us through and out. Perhaps it would be someone who had taken on Satan's tricks and turns and come out successful. And if only such a person would let us know how he did it. Celebrating the Reformation is all about God's promises to us that he has made known to us throughout history. Summarized in just two verses in the book of Revelation are all we need against Satan...

**One little word can fell him**  
**Satan is defeated by a great gospel**  
**Satan is defeated through great messengers**

I worry about Christianity. I worry that people are leaving churches because they think churches don't care about people, or that the church judges people too harshly, or they see the church as not important anymore. I worry, and not just about Christianity as a whole, but our church too. Sometimes it seems we are a step or two away from defeat. Satan appears posed for victory and more people will be lost. But don't be surprised about our day; other times in history have looked the same.

The church of the 1400s experienced similar problems. Church membership was high but what was being taught by the church was dangerous. Preachers talked about Jesus, but they included heavy doses of guilt. They said more was needed, the people would have to do something in order to complete the work of getting them to heaven. People bought into it because it sounded reasonable. Having to pay for something valuable makes sense, even to our ears. So having to pay for forgiveness made sense. Prayers, good deeds, even money were things the church would collect to make God happy with them. The simple gospel message of Jesus was fading and a good works message was rising.

Just a couple of weeks ago Pew Forum released a study tracking religion in America. We live in a country that might just be less Christian than we want to believe. Statistics indicate that one in five Americans has no religious affiliation. That is 20% say religion plays no part in their lives. What's worse, not only do they not care, but they don't want to care. Beyond those numbers are plenty of people calling themselves Christian but have a skewed view of Christianity. Not all people calling themselves Christian believe Jesus did everything to save them. Some believe they have to help in some way. And before we get to high on ourselves, remember our natural thoughts. We could go along with the "I can do something myself to save myself" mentality. We might think keeping the law, offering levels, or membership determines how God views me. If any of these have become our position then our sin has pushed away the gospel from us too, and Satan laughs.

Satan was working during the 1400s and even now to destroy the gospel message, and much of the time it can look like he's winning. God will never let that happen. Through the Reformation God used the gospel to call people back to the gospel. Individuals who before had only gone to a priest when they felt guilty, but left feeling guiltier found comfort in a great gospel message from the Bible. **"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known...this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."** The simple words of the Bible showed them once again the freedom God gives in Christ. It's a freedom and right standing before God that comes from God through Christ. No law keeping, no offering, no membership can take away guilt, only Christ, only faith in Christ, only a gift of God's grace.

Are you looking for comfort, wanting assurance, hoping something can fight back against Satan and win? One little word can fell him. The return to the Bible that started almost 500 years ago in the Reformation can't stop. Satan is defeated by a great gospel. **"Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth."** It's an eternal gospel. Nothing can defeat it. The great gospel is the good news of how Jesus shed blood to save us from our sins. The great gospel is that God has not abandoned you. We must return to it over and over. Make use of it in Bible reading. Make use of it in the Sacraments. Remain strong in this Word by making a commitment to hear it and read it. The great gospel is free, sincere, and is addressed to each one of you. Only through this return to the Scriptures can we remain steady in our understanding that we are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone recorded in the Scriptures alone.

Medication that sits in the bottle doesn't do the person suffering any good. A map left at home doesn't help the family travel to their vacation spot. A homework assignment left at home doesn't help the student get better grades. A great message that has the power to defeat Satan left untouched and unheard doesn't do anyone any good. That great message needs great messengers to get it out. That's just what God has given to his church and Satan has been defeated through great messengers.

The great individual God worked through in the Reformation was Martin Luther. Luther was a Roman Catholic monk lost in his sins. He couldn't see a way in which God would forgive him. Every time he did something to try and make up for sin, he just felt guilty. No amount of making up for his sins seemed to give him comfort. Luther received sound advice to search the Bible for his answer. God led him right to the answer in Romans 1, **"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last."** God led Luther to see that being right with God came from God not from his own works. Luther was forgiven completely and freely in Christ. Now others needed to know it.

Perhaps your Bible reading seems stale. The Bible doesn't seem to have anything new. But the world has plenty that's new. Facebook, Twitter, and all the other social medias. Gaming systems with internet links to friends around the world. Elections and community events. Sports and academic competitions. Sure the gospel has taken root in you, but you don't have time to feed it because there's too much else to do. And it's not like God made you a messenger. But hiding your faith rather than sharing your faith is sinful. Satan wins when our minds are clouded or we hide the message of the gospel. Satan wins and we lose.

The messenger from God proclaims the summary of the gospel. **"He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.'"** This summary urges us into the rest of the Bible. Christ Jesus is the reason you can give God the glory and fear God with holy awe. Christ Jesus is the reason you can worship the true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ Jesus is the Savior, the one with the power and the promises. That power and those promises take away all our sins and make us messengers of his gospel.

Despite Satan's best efforts, God has the gospel on the right track. You are a great messenger of that gospel. Nothing that Satan can do can defeat God. It's Satan who has been defeated by Christ through the cross. God's gospel is being carried on the lips of messengers, both pastors and laypeople. You have the gospel and you have family and friends. That's your opportunity to share. Share the gospel of Jesus in words supported by genuine actions. There is urgency because God says the hour of judgment is now. Now is the time for a Reformation to hear and believe. One little word can fell him. Return to the great gospel and become a great messenger to take that gospel out.

Luther's great Reformation anthem, *A Mighty Fortress*, captures what the great gospel message can do. The work of Satan against the church will continue till the end. But Satan has been defeated. Listen for how Luther describes what made Satan fall. One little word can fell him. That's what defeats Satan. One little word, a great gospel message focused on Christ. One little word proclaimed by great gospel messengers taking that good news message out to others. One little word can fell him.