

The Mission of God's People - Sermon by Gary Timmerman**Nov. 23, 2025****Mission Sunday at Community CRC Kitchener, Ont.****Sermon**

It's an honour for me to be your guest preacher today.

We treasure as a Reformed church that our understanding of the Bible is enriched by some centuries-old, written confessions of our Christian faith, like the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession.

Because we're well into the 21st century, the CRC has a beautiful teaching tool that's only decades old. "Our World Belongs to God" is the name of our contemporary testimony that confirms that same deep faith in Christ's work on the cross toward the renewal of all things, and it addresses the challenging issues of our modern day. North American strongly secular culture devalues God and devalues men and women who take the Word of God literally for what it teaches.

This testimony calls us to become more Christlike in all areas of life in order to fight against sin and to also be a shining light wherever God has placed us.

Let us recite together ARTICLE 41 of this contemporary testimony which carries the theme "The Mission of God's People".

**41. Joining the mission of God,
the church is sent with the gospel of the kingdom
to call everyone to know and follow Christ
and to proclaim to all
the assurance that, in the name of Jesus
there is forgiveness of sin
and new life for all who repent and believe.**

**The Spirit calls all members to embrace God's mission
in their neighborhoods and in the world:
to feed the hungry,
bring water to the thirsty,
welcome the stranger,
clothe the naked, care for the sick,
and free the prisoner.
We repent of leaving this work to a few,
for this mission is central to our being.**

All of us that **God has gathered in this church** have a special calling/mission on our lives toward the people in this neighbourhood –

Even secular organizations in the last 25 years are paste-ing up their mission statements on their walls, their letterheads and their websites:

Even non-believers can use the expression “my mission is to be the best mechanic” in town!

We Christians have a calling above all those callings – we have the mission to **bring** the Good News of the Kingdom of God to everyone – because every human on this earth is an image bearer of the Triune God, *but not everyone knows it or acknowledges it.*

*A foundational Scripture text that this missional **statement found in our Contemporary Testimony** is based on is our text for today. Luke chapter 24 is telling the story of the first Easter Sunday morning and what was going on in the troubled hearts and minds of the followers of Jesus. We read about the violence of that weekend and all the activity around the empty tomb of that Sunday morning. The resurrected Jesus presents himself ‘unrecognized’ by of his two followers on the road to Emmaus outside Jerusalem. Later that day these witnesses met with the disciples to tell of their exciting encounter. Jesus appeared in their midst to prove his resurrection. Gathered with these believers – who stood lost, fearful and defeated after witnessing the Messiah’s crucifixion, listen to Jesus give them the “BIG PICTURE of the Heavenly Father’s salvation plan. We READ Jesus’ own words to them here in our text Luke 24: 45-49:*

⁴⁵Then he [Jesus] opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them,

“This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Humanity from the fall of Adam and Eve, and throughout history have made a **destructive mess** of life on this earth, before the face of Almighty God. In our sin we have brought **shame and disorder** on us as His image bearers, and through us, upon everything in the

As Christians, part of this MISSION CALLING is to be bold yet compassionate about naming this calamity and we are in, and the disorder all over the globe.

One Russian friend of mine, living in Russia, **modelled that truth-telling** in the face of danger and threat. *(I told the story in my April newsletter)*

Sergey, is a pastor my age, and we meet each time I travel to Estonia to encourage our partners in mission there. **Sergey was pulled aside** at the Russia-Estonia border crossing last year **to be interrogated**.

[not sure about you, but for me a panic attack could be setting in if I were in Sergey's shoes at this moment...]

“WHAT’S YOUR ATTITUDE, SIR, TO THE SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATION GOING ON IN UKRAINE?”

Without a flinch, Sergey asserted,

“Certainly what’s going on in Ukraine is tragic!

As a Christian, as a pastor – I see all this through God’s eyes.

This is a time where a great accumulation of sin is now meeting its consequence. If God wanted to end this, He could do it tomorrow!

Something He’s doing with humanity –

Now is the time to check our hearts and humble ourselves before the Almighty God!”

The young officer deeply listened, **maintained respect**, and dismissed Sergey to cross the border onward.

creation that He has so beautifully made. Believers and nonbelievers in the God of the Bible can’t miss looking around and seeing that calamity and what this disorder is leading to.

God's elect, like Sergey, like you and me, who've had our minds opened to this picture of what God sees, are now on a mission and are joining Him to bring renewal – through repentance and then renewal.



That's what this Contemporary Testimony, this hymn-like expression of our Reformed faith for our day, accents when it clarifies what our mission is:

- The central events of the biblical story centered around Jesus
- The kingdom of God has arrived!
- There is renewal of the whole of creation **from the power and effects** of sin after His crucifixion and His resurrection:

Our denominational leader who shapes our vision for church planting, Resonate's Tim Sheridan, recently inspired our group of European missionaries on this Kingdom picture. Sheridan says, "We – through the Church – are God's chosen vehicle for bringing renewal.

- The gospel sets us in the middle of a story
- "The true story of the whole world"
- A story that gives purpose and meaning to our lives

The Gospel story that the Church heralds is not primarily a story about how an individual can be saved, how he/she gains personal salvation - it's true that happens but **such a changed renewed person** is merely an implication of the good news. The story begins with the beginning of all things, God created all things to be good under his gracious and loving reign. Humanity rebels, and God through Christ brings healing for all to be restored. The story ends with the healing of all things.

Sheridan admits that "Ours is a bold, audacious claim in that this is the true story of the whole world. This is what human life is all about, this is where the history of the world is headed, and this is what's true. God's purposes are being accomplished through our lives. We have been redeemed through his work and are a people blessed to be a blessing, for the sake of the world."

Story of Konstantin [Antonov] in Gatchina, near SPb



Late Dec 2017, a man walked out of prison and found himself rejected by relatives who cared from him since he was a teen-aged orphan. With no options for living or work, Konstantin found a dry crawlspace to shelter under a 5-storey apt building. For months he sheltered there. Church planter Jamal's outreach team had a habit of searching these types of spaces as a core part of their ministry – shone the light down there and found scraggly Konstantin covered with lice, bites and filthy blankets. "Come, our New Years feast is waiting for you!" Cleaned up, treated of his wounds and shaved, freshly clothed Kostya appeared 30 years younger and beamed around the fellowship and food of the New Year feast meal. The Holy Spirit made him open to the message of renewal and a new chance at life, and the church was God's instrument.

Fast forward 7 years, he wrote me this summer, and sent these pictures:

Dear Gary,

To the brothers and sisters in Calgary, although we never met in person, FIVE YEARS AGO GOD USED YOU TO CHANGE MY LIFE –

Your generosity and faith allowed me to get a theological education.

This summer I defended my diploma and got my Bachelor's degree in Christian spiritual care and psychological counseling.

This is part of your obedience to God!

Gary, your help to share my story and my need to the friends in Calgary came at the right time, an answer to prayer.

Your church, although separated by great distance, became an example of true Christian unity to me.

Thank you for your trust and sacrifice! May the Lord bless each of you abundantly and multiply your ministry.

With deep gratitude, your brother in Christ, KONSTANTIN

Even before his diploma, Konstantin was covered in God's blessings – the orphanage of his youth tracked him down to award him a state-supplied apartment, he got married and got a good job leading a brigade of stockers at a warehouse. He's spent all the past 7 years growing as a disciple of Christ, saved from the edge of death, and being a testimony of renewed life in gratitude to his Saviour. He's a daily missionary at work, around the city, and on outreach Saturdays.

Konstantin is today in the company of Christ, the family of God's redeemed, because one day God used the Church to sweep him into recognizing the real work of Christ. Christ's glory was not his miracles, his wonderful sermons, the turning-upside-down work that He did on people like Zacchaeus and Konstantin. His glory and victory lay in the path of his suffering and death and resurrection. We as his followers are called as Konstantin has been called, to take up the cross daily and follow Jesus and so prove that we are his disciples.

Our identity is to be a missionary church. Mission is not **one, optional activity** that a portion of the people in the church are doing. We as a body of followers of Jesus are always **seeking to put this gospel on display**, and especially in the culture and the **place where** He has called **us** to be. Our world doesn't accept the reality of the spiritual forces at work. But our world is the same world, just a different geography and historical era, than the one the **apostle Paul** addressed in Acts 17 in the city of Athens when he sat with a group of wise philosophers, curious about Paul's interpretation of "the unknown god". Pavel delivered the message: "From one man God of heaven and earth made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; God has determined the allotted times and boundaries of the dwelling places of each people, ***that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.***"

– we are **the people too** who are spoken about here; us, our children and the generations after us, *and all newer Canadian peoples from around the world who end up in Kitchener, Ontario*,

Mission for you begins in your Jerusalem, right here in Kitchener, says Jesus in this last chapter of Luke.

⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Surely we have been clothed with the power of the Triune God – having the **presence, the leading and the gifts of the Holy Spirit** to be those witnesses.

Now looking at the 2nd half of the Article 41 of that hymn-like Contemporary Testimony. We see what that witnessing looks like and **what** the Holy Spirit calls all of us to do

**The Spirit calls all members to embrace God’s mission
in their neighborhoods and in the world:**

to feed the hungry,

bring water to the thirsty,

welcome the stranger,

clothe the naked, care for the sick,

and free the prisoner.

**We repent of leaving this work to a few,
for this mission is central to our being.**

APJ Pastor John Piper is one of my favourite pastor-authors. He exhorts, “The local church is the **embassy** of God on earth, the **platform** from which the Lord God advances evangelism, discipleship, and mission. We can’t do missions **without** the church.

The church is the aim of missions in one sense because here is where the worship of God is most fully expressed.”

We don’t see the Great Commission disconnected from the church. It’s a mission given to the church. “You’re all missionaries.”

True, there are these frontier types, or pioneer-type missionaries, like Galina and I, those who want to go someplace where Christ isn't named and put a **stake** in the ground and herald His name and gather disciples, and then roll up their sleeves and got involved in doing that amazing thing of forming churches.

God bless you and your dear ones, God bless all of us as we put our stake in the ground in whichever place and situation you carry an influence and responsibility to let your light shine for our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

----- End of sermon -----

Sources for writing this sermon:

Resonate Church Planting Leader Tim Sheridan was added to the text where I quoted him on page 4.

Also Pastor John Piper (podcast Ask Pastor John) is one of my favorite pastor-writers and is included in page 7 thoughts.

Though I didn't find actual quotes in my sermon from another podcast by Allister Begg, there's a lot of inspiration from listening to his sermon "Getting the Big Picture" on Luke 24.

closing blessing (Gary)

Please stand and open your hands to receive God's blessing: - May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, equip you with everything good that you may do His will this week. May He work in you that wherever God sends you on mission this week, you will act and say what is pleasing in his sight. To God be glory forever and ever. Amen. — Hebrews 13:20–21