

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Guest Speaker Rev. Carey Jo Johnston

Mission Possible  
Proper 14  
Luke 4:14-21

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

In your wisdom, O God, you call us here to worship you.

**We gather, alive to the Word of God.**

You call us to be fully alive with your life abundant,  
ready to listen and respond with heart, soul, strength, and mind.

**We listen, alive to the Word of God.**

You call us to be always watchful for your Word of wisdom,  
sometimes startling and unexpected,  
sometimes still and quiet,  
but always dwelling among us.

**We watch and wait for the Word of God.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Almighty God,  
you sent your Holy Spirit  
to be the life and light of your church.  
Open our hearts to the riches of your grace,  
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit  
in love, joy, and peace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn #300: "Father, We Love You"

Father, we love You,  
we worship, we adore You,  
Glorify your name in all the earth.

Glorify your name, glorify your name,  
Glorify your name in all the earth.

Jesus, we love You,  
we worship, we adore You,  
Glorify your name in all the earth.  
Glorify your name, glorify your name,  
Glorify your name in all the earth.

Spirit, we love You,  
we worship, we adore You,  
Glorify your name in all the earth.  
Glorify your name, glorify your name,  
Glorify your name in all the earth.

### **Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
Let us make our confession to God.

### **Prayer of Confession**

**Merciful God,  
in your gracious presence  
we confess our sin and the sin of this world.  
Although Christ is among us as our peace,  
we are a people divided against ourselves  
as we cling to the values of a broken world.  
The profit and pleasures we pursue  
lay waste the land and pollute the seas.  
The fears and jealousies that we harbor  
set neighbor against neighbor  
and nation against nation.  
We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom,  
of intellect and reason,  
and turn them into bonds of oppression.  
Lord, have mercy upon us;  
heal and forgive us.  
Set us free to serve you in the world  
as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news!

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,  
 whose sin is covered.  
 Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,  
 and in whose spirit there is no deceit.  
 Know that in Jesus,  
 God embraces you, forgives you,  
 and strengthens you to live a renewed life.  
 Thanks be to God.

### The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread.  
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.  
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

### Responsive Reading

#### Psalm 146

Praise the LORD!  
 Praise the LORD, O my soul!  
**<sup>2</sup> I will praise the LORD as long as I live;  
 I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.**

<sup>3</sup> Put not your trust in princes,  
 in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.  
**<sup>4</sup> When his breath departs, he returns to the earth;  
 on that very day his plans perish.**

<sup>5</sup> Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,  
 whose hope is in the LORD his God,  
**<sup>6</sup> who made heaven and earth,  
 the sea, and all that is in them,  
 who keeps faith forever;**

<sup>7</sup> who executes justice for the oppressed,  
 who gives food to the hungry.  
 The LORD sets the prisoners free;  
**<sup>8</sup> the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.  
 The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;  
 the LORD loves the righteous.**

<sup>9</sup> The LORD watches over the sojourners;  
he upholds the widow and the fatherless,  
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

<sup>10</sup> **The LORD will reign forever,  
your God, O Zion, to all generations.  
Praise the LORD!**

**Children’s Hymn #266: “King of Kings”**

King of kings and Lord of lords, glory, hallelujah!  
Jesus, Prince of Peace, glory, hallelujah!

King of kings and Lord of lords, glory, hallelujah!  
Jesus, Prince of Peace, glory, hallelujah!

**Children’s Lesson**

**Prayer for illumination**  
**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Scripture**

**Luke 4:14-21**

<sup>14</sup> And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup> And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

<sup>16</sup> And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

<sup>17</sup> And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

<sup>18</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

<sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

## Sermon

Guest Message by Carey Jo Johnston

Mission Possible

Luke 4:14-21; Psalm 146

Rev. Carey Jo Johnston with Literacy & Evangelism International – Canada

Aug 13 2023

Mission Impossible, the old tv shows and the movies had the agent being asked to perform a seemingly impossible mission. The agent chooses whether to accept the mission or not. The agent then somehow did the impossible. As we read our Luke passage today, we heard the mission of Jesus, preach good news to the poor, give sight to the blind, freedom for prisoners, release the oppressed, and we say... Mission Impossible! But with God, all things are possible!

**Jesus accepted his mission from his Father.** God the Father gave Jesus the Son his mission. Jesus gave up the glory of heaven. He came to earth taking on the nature of humanity and brings them into the family. For 30+ years on earth, Jesus prepared to implement his mission. This day we read about in Luke, he went to the synagogue, the place of worship, as was his custom. He'd come back to his hometown, the local boy returned! People excitedly watched to see what he would do. They'd heard about his baptism in the river Jordan. As the service proceeded, the rabbi invited Jesus to come forward and read from the Torah, the sacred Scriptures. Jesus accepted the honour and the challenge. He took the scroll handed to him and read from the prophet Isaiah.

18"The Spirit of the Lord is on  
me, because he has  
anointed me to preach good  
news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to release the oppressed,  
19to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."[a]

This passage was one often held up as a promise of the coming Messiah; The one who would save God's people from the Romans. The people of Israel eagerly looked forward to the day when the Messiah would come.

Coming after his baptism where the Spirit of the Lord came upon him to anoint him for his mission, Jesus proclaims publicly his mission before the hometown crowd. They'd known him as Jesus, the carpenter's son. Now, by reading this passage Jesus heightens the messianic

expectations of the gathering. Then in an astounding turn of events, he makes this incredible statement, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus in essence says, I am the Messiah, the anointed one, the one who has come to save! This is my mission, and this I will do. Jesus accepted his mission from his Father.

**Mission Possible!** What seems impossible to us is possible with God! With God, all things are possible! The rest of Luke relates the details of how Jesus accomplished his mission. Jesus preached the good news to the poor, the poor in Spirit and the poor in body. He proclaimed the coming of God's kingdom.

Jesus' mission included bringing order to a broken world, a foretaste of eternity. Jesus healed people. He healed the lame, the lepers, the woman bleeding for 18 years who had given up hope. He healed their spirits and forgave their sins. Jesus gave sight to the blind. Jesus taught about how to live in right relationship with God. He taught through parables such as the prodigal son, the lost sheep. He teaches what we call the "Lord's Prayer," how we can communicate with God. Jesus teaches us how to live in right relationship with others. Jesus raised people from the dead, a young girl, a widow's son. He freed people from unclean spirits. He trained his followers to continue his mission.

All the things Jesus did on earth showed us how life could be when sin, when rebellion from God, was finally destroyed. All Jesus did on earth was focused on one goal. His mission ultimately focused on eternity. Jesus came to save. He came to save us from everlasting death to everlasting life. Yes, he healed physical bodies. Yes, he taught spiritual truths, but the lasting result of Jesus' mission was his death on the cross. Jesus won the victory over sin and death once and for all. This is the eternal truth of the earthly works... Jesus gives abundant life to the poor, Jesus brings recovery of our spiritual sight. We see things from God's perspective. Jesus frees the prisoners from death to eternal life. Jesus brings release of the oppressed. We are no longer bound by the spiritual death of Satan. Mission accomplished! With God all things are possible!

**Jesus gives us our mission.** In all the Gospels, Jesus gives the same general mission...

From Matthew: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

In Acts (the second volume of Luke's gospel) Jesus tell us "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus' mission is now our mission. In John's gospel, Jesus told his disciples, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. 14You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

We have a mission to preach good news to the poor, free the prisoners, release the oppressed, give recovery of sight to the blind. Jesus challenges us to help those on earth while sharing the way to eternal life. We do this, empowered by the Spirit of God, the promised Holy Spirit, through our giving, through our prayers, and even more importantly through our time. Jesus provides the resources and power that we need to accomplish what he calls us to do. Jesus gives us our mission.

**The ways we live out the mission Jesus has given us are as varied as we are.** Literally hundreds if not thousands of organizations exist to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, sight for the blind, release of the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

I'd like to share with you today about a ministry that is close to my heart, for over 30 years I've been involved with Literacy & Evangelism International...

Our mission: equip the Church to share the message of Jesus Christ through the gift of reading and conversational English. The mission was founded in 1967 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In the last 10 years, it has grown to include a network of groups we call Member Nations, franchises if you will of national organizations who have been trained by the USA office and have a vision for literacy and ESL ministry. LEI-Canada is one of the member nations, registered in 2008. To accomplish our mission we have 3 strategies: We develop curriculum to teach basic reading in local languages and conversational English. All of our materials include some Bible-content. 2<sup>nd</sup> strategy: We train church leaders and missionaries to use LEI materials for evangelism, discipleship and church planting. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> strategy: working with partners, churches/mission organizations.

**The Need:** In our world of over 7 billion people, around 20% of the world cannot read and write in their language (that is 1 billion 400 million) nearing 2 billion. 100 million children do not have access to schools. Women, people with disabilities and the very poor are the most likely to be illiterate. At the same time around 95% of the people have a Bible available in a language that they speak. They just can't read it! At the same time, learning to speak English is a goal of many people internationally, 1.5 million people are learning English. But especially for immigrants to English speaking countries this is needed. Here in Canada, we have over 400,000 immigrants each year, many who cannot speak English. In the past year we have heard a lot about the Ukrainian refugees that are coming to Canada. Many of them need to learn English as well. Many of these English learners have never heard the Gospel. And the nonreaders cannot read the Bible.

Let me share with you about a literacy and ESL ministry in Uganda. Hands Across Nations ministry has sponsored literacy materials in the Lango language and has helped to establish a literacy program. 26% of Lango adults have no formal schooling at all, and 72% have less than a few years of primary school education. Caroline and Levi attended the International Literacy Training Institute in Tulsa, OK in June 2013. In Jan 2014 the Lango literacy materials with Bible content were written. An LEI consultant facilitated the writing of the lessons with Lango language speakers. They had their

first teacher training right after that. Then, In February of 2014 the first classes began... we received a report one year later

"The Hands Across Nations' "Learning to Read to Read the Bible" program has literally exploded into 7 of the 8 Lango districts! ... There are so many wonderful stories now coming from teachers, learners and local leaders. They are a far cry from the refugee camp reports of the last 2 decades, where charities came to distribute "food and things" to them, and they could do very little for themselves. Some village classes are learning how to make liquid soap, candles and jam to raise the funds for their program. Other classes are planning a large community garden for all the classes in which learners are from different church denominations. At another village, one class has decided to take advantage of the wonderful clay God has provided them, and make pots to sell at the nearby market.

One local leader told how his job has now become quite easy. Community unity is becoming a reality. Women in his village who frequently came to him with disputes with their neighbors are now peacefully working together on their homework in the classes, doing projects together, and have purpose in their lives. Several women stated that their husbands have new respect and love for them as they are progressing with their reading and writing. One lady said that she and her children do their homework together each day and she has gained their respect also.

The Lira Main Prison classes are moving forward at a blistering pace. They are a phenomenal group of learners! In less than 4 weeks, 4 men's classes totaling over 100 learners have completed 21 lessons! A new class of 15 non readers has started and has already completed 7 lessons in just over a week. Their program coordinator, an inmate himself, said that many of them have said they want to complete all of the 72 lessons before being released from the prison so they are motivated to go to classes for 3 1/2 hours,

5 days a week. Classes are held under a tarp, sitting on a papyrus mat - no cushy classrooms there! The women's class of 48 learners is moving more slowly because most of them had never held a pen let alone written their name or learned even their alphabet. However, they are progressing more rapidly than most of the village groups because they meet, like the men, 5 days a week for several hours of class.

Our greatest joy is hearing the descriptions of how people have learned through their classes of God's love for them and desire to become a follower of Christ. Through reading the scriptures in the lessons, without arm twisting or badgering, people are finding "Life" in Christ. Two of the new believers were Muslims.

To date, the numbers of teachers and learners encompassed in the program are astounding in our minds: 1009 teachers trained since the end of February 2014, over 300 classes now in progress with more than 10,000 learners becoming readers! How is that possible? Who besides God could have such a plan for such a small group of people from the small town of Chewelah, working with another group of poorly appreciated trainers and teachers, by the world's standard, on the other side of the globe, in Africa? It's preposterous to think of setting out to do such a thing! Each night as we talk about how



we are beginning to see the fruit of our labor, we are humbled and so grateful to have had this chance of a lifetime. We know that it is actually God's hands, not ours, which are drawing those He wants to use and teach for His greater purposes.”

We say without God Mission Impossible! But with God Mission Possible!

April 2022 Update: “Due to Covid-19, HAN was locked out of the 12 Prisons but communicated with the Regional Welfare Officer who reported that there are still many teachers remaining who are willing to continue with classes. Thankfully, we were allowed to restart this past fall in Lira Prison with new materials we sent through our staff for learning to read in the Lango language as well as English. Bible Discovery groups have continued as well with prisoners at Lira Main Prison who are now reading well, and they have read the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the books of James and First, Second and Third John. What an amazing feat that is for men who could not read until recently! The new group of learners have finished their training and are waiting for us to return to take their exams and move to learning to read in English, while new classes learning to read in the Lango Language will start up. While we are in Uganda for the next 2 months, the plan is for 2-3 more prisons to restart their classes. Hallelujah! God is on the move through “the least of these brothers and sisters of Christ”! They have been incredibly capable teachers when they return to their villages and start up classes!” Their ministry continues to expand and impact thousands for Christ.

In our mission to create Bible-content Curriculum, our global network is developing a new ESL curriculum we call Light of the World. In what will be a 7 level curriculum going from zero English to Academic English, each lesson has Bible content. It is designed to be taught by Christian, non-professional, volunteer tutors, it provides the tutor with a step-by-step methodology for teaching English conversation, reading, and writing. It is relational.

The curriculum is designed for digital platforms with Google/Powerpoint slides, videos of the slides on YouTube, printable PDF's, or printed books available on Amazon.

This year in January, we trained 15 teachers at Evangel church in Oshawa on how to use the curriculum in a 10 hour workshop. In March, they began 2 classes with a total of 19 students from 10 different countries. They started a 2 additional classes in May. They had 31 students in 4 classes. After a summer break, they will start back in Sept. We have people using our method and curriculum all over the world, teaching on-line as well as in-person.

Here in Canada, we have Teacher Training Workshops for both English literacy using our Firm Foundation materials which are for people who speak English but cannot read and write as well as our ESL ministry as mentioned earlier. We assist groups to develop Bible-content literacy books in their local languages. Share the vision at conferences and in churches, assist in facilitating our on-line classes. I just completed facilitating our 2 Primer Construction courses over the last 9 weeks. September I will be traveling to Brazil for a conference with our Member Nation partners. There are currently 15 Member Nation partners in our network – a Member Nation is something like a franchise – an indigenous LEI organization in various countries. This is a mission that God has called me to... where is God calling you? Each of us is called and commissioned to go and make disciples. How and where we do that is

unique to each of us. It may be a ministry here at the church, or another group that God puts on your heart. It may be something specifically at your place of work, the hockey arena, the soccer field. You name it – God can use it to bring people to himself through us.

With Literacy & Evangelism perhaps, God is calling you to be part of this mission: you can

- **Pray for us on a regular basis**
- **Become a literacy or ESL teacher**
- **Looking for literacy/ESL missionaries**
- **Become a regular financial partner**
- **Host an Information night with friends or another fundraising event •**

Check out our website [www.literacyevangelism.ca](http://www.literacyevangelism.ca)

We may think Mission Impossible – but with God all things are possible!

### **Hymn #357: “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds” (V 1,2,3)**

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
in a believer's ear;  
it soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds  
and drives away our fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,  
and calms the troubled breast;  
'tis manna to the hungry soul,  
and to the weary rest.

Dear name! the rock on which I build,  
my shield and hiding place,  
my neverfailing treasury,  
filled with boundless stores of grace.

### **Invitation to Offering**

#### **Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

**E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. [standrewspert offering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspert offering@gmail.com) If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.**

**Offertory Prayer**  
**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Closing Hymn #313: “Oh Worship the King” (V 1,2,5)**

Oh worship the King, all glorious above;  
 oh gratefully sing God's power and God's love,  
 our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,  
 pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.

Oh tell of God's might, oh sing of God's grace,  
 whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;  
 whose chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,  
 and dark is God's path on the wings of the storm.

The earth, with its store of wonders untold,  
 Almighty, thy power hath founded of old,  
 hath stablished it fast by a changeless decree,  
 and round it hath cast, like a mantle, the sea.

**Pastoral Prayer**

Mighty God,  
 we give you thanks for life and breath to follow you all our days.  
 Thank you for the gift of faith that gives us courage when things are difficult,  
 and for the encouragement we find in the faith of others we meet.  
 Inspire us to remain loyal to you as our true Source of life and hope.

We thank you for guiding us when we cannot see the path ahead.  
 Thank you for showing us a way through our challenges  
 when we cannot see a solution on our own  
 Renew our trust in you in these days when so much is confusing and uncertain.

We pray for those who wonder if they can rely on you,  
 and for those who are afraid for the future.

Give them courage to listen for your call and follow your leading.

We pray for those who doubt.  
Give them courage to explore those doubts and questions  
and so, discover renewed trust in your promises.

We pray for those who are impatient.  
Bless them in times of waiting for what comes next  
and fill them with kindness.

We pray for those who have chosen a path that has led to trouble.  
Turn their hearts towards you  
and lead them in ways of goodness, justice, and generosity.

We pray for your Church in these days when so much is changing.  
Give us wisdom to discern ways to reach out to our community,  
and faithfulness to keep following Jesus into the future you hold in your hands.

All knowing Father, we depend on you.  
Be gracious and bless us, so that our lives may be a blessing to others.  
Together we pray in the name of Jesus Christ,  
Our lord and savior,  
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
As the one true God,  
Now and forevermore, **Amen.**

### **Benediction**

The love of God the Father, the faithful creator,  
the peace of Christ, the wounded healer,  
the joy of the challenging Spirit,  
the hope of the Three in One  
surround and encourage you  
today, tonight, and forever