Note: The following message will be shared by Reverend Caleb Kim this Sunday, November 1, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. for the congregation of St. Andrew's, Fenelon Falls, and our community on Zoom.

Title: Showing Mercy to Our Family

Over my more than 32 years of pastoral ministry—including ten years in campus mission—I have learned one profound truth above almost everything else: relationships are everything. God created us for connection, and the health of our relationships impacts the quality of our lives and our faith.

Some time ago, while attending the 60th wedding anniversary celebration for a couple… Statistically speaking, it is extraordinarily rare nowadays. According to demographic research across North America, while around 50 to 60 percent of first marriages reach their 20th anniversary, only about 5 to 6 percent of all married couples reach their 50th golden anniversary. Celebrating a 60th diamond anniversary is considered a truly extraordinary milestone.

Reaching that milestone is not just about avoiding divorce; it is about weathering life's various storms, showing mercy repeatedly, growing together through decades of change, and choosing understanding day after day. In other words, when we see a couple standing together after 50 or 60 years, we are looking at a living miracle of grace and commitment.

Over my years of ministry, I have been privileged to witness these living miracles right here in our own congregation. Yet, I have also come to realize that no relationship is immune to friction or strain. There is room for every couple, family, and group to grow with the help of the Lord. Behind closed doors, every home experiences moments of disputes between parents and children, arguments among siblings, or distance between spouses. It breaks our hearts when distance occurs at the very place called home—the place meant to be our greatest sanctuary of love and peace.

Do we know the first conflict between humans mentioned in the Bible? That battle did not occur between enemies. Unfortunately, the first fight happened between a husband and a wife: Adam and Eve. When they were created, they enjoyed pure fellowship. However, they started blaming one another once they disobeyed the Word of God. Neither Adam nor Eve took responsibility for what they did wrong before God; instead, they accused each other. Even though they still lived in the Garden of Eden, they lost paradise in their hearts. They could no longer see each other through the merciful eyes of the Lord.

Do we know the second conflict recorded in Scripture? Tragically, that incident took place between family members–siblings—Cain and Abel, the children of Adam and Eve. Cain killed his brother Abel. The Bible is never shy about exposing shortcomings between people who are closest to each other. Even in the family line of Abraham and Sarah, Jacob deceived his twin brother Esau. Joseph was sold into slavery due to the envy of his own brothers. King Saul sought to kill his faithful e servant, David.

King David, later known as a man after God's own heart, had to pray: "I will be careful to lead a blameless life—when will you come to me? I will conduct the affairs of my house with a blameless heart" (Psalm 101:2). The Lord our God also wants each of us to make a decision to walk a blameless path, especially in our own homes.

Before we go any further, I want us to take a quick self-evaluation called: How merciful are we with our families and our loved ones? Sometimes we do not even fully understand our own motivations, do we? So how can we claim to know someone else's motives so well? The bottom line of this test is this: Are we more polite with strangers than with our own family members?

Over the past three Sundays, we have been studying the topic of God's mercy in our lives. In our sacred text for today from 1 Corinthians 13—known as the Love Chapter—the Apostle Paul describes fifteen characteristics of love. These are marks of mercy. This morning, we will look at what God's Word teaches about the importance of love in our relationships, particularly within our families and with our loved ones. As we explore three signs of compassion from Paul's teaching, we can apply them to build strong family relationships that not only survive challenging times, but overcome and truly thrive through those difficult seasons.

First, we can show mercy at home by not being easily angered, but by being patient and kind. The Bible says that "Love is patient, love is kind... it is not easily angered" (1 Corinthians 13:4–5).

Patience is one of the hardest virtues to practice in any human relationship. As I indicated earlier, we often struggle to be patient with those closest to us, especially when they repeat the same mistakes. Instead of forgiving them and praying for them—which is the merciful thing to do—impatience causes us to be easily angered with our loved ones and express unkindness in our words, deeds, or even thoughts. People hurt one another deeply through these hurtful behaviors.

Anger is a frequently misunderstood emotion. The Bible does not say that feeling angry is inherently a sin. Whether we realize it or not, Jesus became angry when He saw religious leaders turning God's temple into a marketplace, selling sacrificial animals in a sacred place. He was deeply zealous for His Father's house. Anger is a God-given capacity; when we see people being wronged or abused, it should upset us, and we need to express that righteous concern correctly. But according to Scripture, uncontrolled, sinful anger causes foolish and destructive things to happen in our lives—especially at home, where family members are hurt deeply.

Pastor Rick Warren often says that in every group—whether a workplace, a church, or a family—there are always EGR people: Extra Grace Required… I am the one who needs extra love. Indeed, we are all people who require extra mercy. When we humbly admit this fact, we can become more patient, kind, and slow to anger.

There was a Korean TV program called The Changing Relationship that I liked to watch. Every week, the producers introduced various conflict cases between husbands and wives or parents and children. Each episode showed the dramatic difference before and after the participants received marriage or family counseling and came to understand each other's past life experiences. By learning proper ways of communicating with loved ones, many participants experienced transformation in their relationships. One method that caught my interest was gaining an understanding of a spouse's background and burdens. Counselors encouraged each spouse to share their story, particularly incidents that bothered or hurt them from early childhood. The other spouse was encouraged not only to listen, but to empathize with what their partner had lived through. After both heard each other's stories, they were able to better understand their partner's fears and hurts, enabling them to be far more patient with one another. Growing in patience with our loved ones requires us to do the same. When we understand each other's past circumstances and struggles, we can be much kinder to one another.

Furthermore, as followers of Christ, we must remember that our patience depends on our relationship with the Lord. If we walk closely with Jesus Christ, kindness will flow naturally into our lives. Being slow to anger does not come easily to us because it goes against our fallen human nature. Think about how patient and kind God has been to each of us. If the Lord did not understand our backgrounds and the burdens we carry, He might look only at our missteps. Yet God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to become human and to die for our sake on the cross. That is why we can "approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Filled with God's love and grace, we can extend that same understanding to the people in our lives who need extra mercy.

Secondly, we can show mercy at home by letting go of past hurts. Scripture says that "love keeps no record of wrongs."

When people hurt us, we have two natural human tendencies: remember it and retaliate. First, we remember it. We stockpile it in our minds and say to ourselves, “I will never forget that.” We rehearse it over and over. Second, we retaliate—we want to get even. For instance, in my cultural background, some parents pass their hurtful stories down to their children. In fact, a common theme in Korean dramas and movies is family revenge, where children remember the wrongs done to their parents and seek to avenge them. Truth be told, every time we recall, rehearse, and replay past offenses in our minds, we allow ourselves to be wounded all over again.

I can never think of forgiveness without thinking of Joseph. As I mentioned earlier, Joseph was betrayed by his brothers out of envy. They plotted against him and sold him into slavery. Joseph endured years of hardship, but by the grace of God, he overcame every trial and eventually became a powerful leader in Egypt. Years later, when his brothers came to Egypt seeking food during a famine, they discovered Joseph was the prime minister. They were terrified standing before him. At that moment, Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me. I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt.” He had not forgotten what happened, and humanly speaking, he had the power to retaliate. But Joseph did not seek revenge. Instead, he forgave them, saying: “Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:19–20). Joseph showed mercy to his brothers because he viewed his life through the sovereign eyes of God.

God is in control of all things. If we want to become the merciful people God calls us to be, we must look at the cross of Jesus and receive His abundant forgiveness. Have we ever wondered what would happen if God kept a record of every sin we have committed? If God brought up all our wrongdoings, it would be deeply shameful. But when we repent of our sins, God’s record is wiped clean. As the Psalmist declares: “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).

Baptism is a beautiful symbol of this letting go. It is a declaration saying: “I am letting go of my old ways, my old hurts, my old pains, and my old sins. I am accepting the forgiveness of God, and I am offering that same forgiveness to others.” Friends, God has given each of us a new life to enjoy, and He offers us a fresh start today. The past is past. If we are still rehearsing hurtful memories—whether from things we have done or

things done to us—let them go in the name of God's mercy. Love keeps no record of wrongs.

Thirdly, we can show mercy at home by believing that God is actively at work in the lives of our loved ones. The Bible says that "love always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

We need to believe that God is working in the hearts of our family members, even when we cannot see it yet. Faith, mercy, love, and grace always go together. Over my years of ministry, I have discovered that almost everyone deals with insecurity in one way or another. Studies show that experiencing rejection early in life can leave deep scars. When I was a young boy, I wanted so badly to be chosen for a team and to be accepted. Belonging is a fundamental human desire, which is why harsh or dismissive words can be so damaging.

We often hear the question: "Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?" But consider this statement: "Have you realized that the Lord God has accepted you?" Sometimes we wonder if God truly accepts us because we feel our failures and shortcomings are too big to be forgiven. But the Prophet Isaiah reminds us of God's word: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

Do you know when I feel most encouraged? … Likewise, the deepest happiness in life comes from knowing that God recognizes us as His precious creation and calls us His beloved children. People tend to live up to the expectations we place on them. We shape the people around us by how we view them… We set people up by what we expect of them. If we label family members negatively or approach them critically, we bring discouragement into our homes. But in a discouraging world, our homes should be the place where positive, hopeful, and encouraging words are heard.

God wants us to see our loved ones as Jesus sees us. When Jesus called His twelve disciples, He did not focus on their present limitations. Most were ordinary fishermen, yet Jesus saw their potential, discipled them, trusted them, and prayed for them. He placed the ultimate mission in their hands, telling them to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Jesus' belief in them transformed their lives. Even when the Apostle Peter denied Him three times, Jesus restored him three times with the exact same question and the exact same mission: "Do you love me?" and "Feed my sheep." That merciful trust turned a fearful disciple into a bold apostle. Love always hopes for the best.

Some of us might say, “Lord, you don’t know my family member. I simply cannot trust them anymore.” If that is where we find ourselves today, God calls us to keep trusting in Him. God invites us to put our faith in the God who is able to transform any heart. God created the universe out of nothing, and He is still in the business of performing miracles today. If our loved ones need a transformation, keep asking God for His supernatural help. Prayer is the highest expression of our faith in God and our love for our family. God will make a way where there seems to be no way.

The enemy wants to tempt us to criticize, blame, and hold grudges against one another. When we grade each other harshly, relationships break down. But Jesus gives us a new commandment in John 13:34: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” Remember: we cannot give to others what we have not received ourselves. We come to understand how to love our families when we first grasp how deeply God loves us.

To conclude this message, I want to share one of my favorite stories about the genuine love of a seminary professor… He demonstrated that authentic love does not wait for a convenient time. The best time to show love and mercy is now—not tomorrow, not later, not when we finally get around to it, but today. Whatever opportunities God gives us to show mercy to our spouses, our children, our parents, and our neighbors, let us choose to do it today. Let us extend the same patience, forgiveness, and hope to our families that God has so richly poured into our lives. Amen.

*In this message, I have drawn inspiration and outline materials from Pastor Rick Warren’s sermon series “The Miracle of Mercy” (specifically on 1 Corinthians 13).