Note: The following message will be shared by Reverend Caleb Kim this Sunday, November 8, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. for the congregation of St. Andrew's, Fenelon Falls, and our community on Zoom.

Title: Being an Agent of Mercy (The Miracle of Mercy, Part 5)

Many of us have heard of the famous book titled “The Purpose Driven Life,” written by Pastor Rick Warren. In his book, Pastor Warren describes five core purposes that God has designed for our lives. The first goal is that we are called to be loved. In other words, spiritually speaking, we are born to know God’s love and love Him back. We call this an act of worship. The second purpose is that we are called to belong. That means that we are called to love others and be part of the family of God. This is called fellowship. In our relationships with one another, we can enjoy a richer, more meaningful life. The third goal in our walk with God is that we are called to grow in spiritual maturity and become more like Jesus Christ. That process is called discipleship. The fourth calling in our faith journey is that we are called to serve God using the unique gifts and abilities He has given us. The Bible calls that ministry. Once we understand these first four purposes, God calls us to pass them on to others. That is the fifth goal in life–calling to Mission.

Jesus speaks of this fifth purpose in Acts 1:8, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” What is a witness? In a courtroom, a witness doesn’t present a legal argument. A witness simply says, “This is what I saw… This is what happened to me…” Likewise, as witnesses of Jesus, our job is simply to share what God has done in our lives. If God has helped us overcome worry and fear, that is a story we can share. If God has helped us manage our temper, that is a testimony worth telling. Some of us have stories of how God sustained us through a financial crisis, restored a broken marriage, or renewed a family relationship. Every one of us has testimonies of God’s work in our lives. We don't need to be a professional theologian or quote every verse of the Bible from memory. Notice that Jesus did not say, “You will be my defense attorney.” It is not our job to defend God. Nor did He say, “You will be my prosecutor.” It is not our job to convince people–that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Our calling is simply to be faithful witnesses to what God has done for us.

Over the past four Sundays, we have been studying the miracles of God’s mercy. Being a witness to what Jesus has done for us means becoming an agent of what Jesus cares about most. In our gospel reading today, Jesus declares: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Matthew 9:13). He said this in response to religious leaders who criticized Him for eating and spending time with tax collectors and social outcasts. In those days, tax collectors were deeply disliked because many were corrupt, overcharging their fellow citizens to enrich themselves and serve the Roman occupation. However, one day, Jesus walked up to a tax collector named Matthew and invited him to become one of His disciples. Overjoyed by this calling, Matthew hosted a large banquet for Jesus and invited his fellow tax collectors and friends–people who shared his poor reputation. That party was Matthew’s way of witnessing to his friends about Jesus’ love. He wanted them to meet Jesus and experience His mercy.

Today, in the final message of our Miracle of Mercy series, we will examine three key principles of being an agent of God’s mercy. We will also consider where God calls us to put His mercy into practice.

The first principle of being an agent of mercy is that we must start looking and listening for the needs of others. Mercy begins with attention and awareness. In our scripture for this morning, before Jesus called Matthew, He had just healed a paralyzed man. When the crowd saw this miracle, they were filled with awe and praised God (Matthew 9:8). Imagine the noisy crowd surrounding Jesus as He walked down the street. Yet, amidst the dense crowd, Jesus noticed Matthew sitting alone at his tax booth. Jesus gave Matthew His full attention and saw what he truly needed: clear direction and purpose. Matthew may have grown up poor, desiring wealth above all else. He believed money would bring him happiness. Yet despite acquiring material goods, he was empty and searching for real meaning. This search brought him to watch Jesus. When Jesus looked at him and said, “Follow me”, Matthew immediately stood up, left his booth, and became an agent of mercy.

…We tend to be in a hurry. We walk fast, talk fast, and eat fast. Many relationships are damaged by haste. How can we offer full attention to someone in need if we are always in a rush? Remember that our Creator God pays full attention to us despite His busyness. Think about how busy the Maker of heaven and earth is. He takes care of all the galaxies in this universe! Yet God, who is in control of all creation, cares deeply for every individual creature.

Later in his Gospel, Matthew describes Jesus’ care for each of us in these comforting words: “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns… See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin… Do not worry, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ …Your heavenly Father knows that you need them… All these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow…” (Matthew 6:25-34). The reason we can place our lives confidently in His hands is because God pays close attention to each of us. He numbers the very hairs on our heads and. He knows everything about us and what needs to be done for us, our families, our church, and our community. In turn, God calls us to slow down, pay attention to Him, and follow Him with all of our heart, mind, and strength. When we slow down, give people our full attention, and look around at those God places in our path, we become instruments of His mercy.

The second principle is that we must choose our words carefully. In 1 John 3:18, the Apostle John writes: “Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” True love requires both faithful actions and truthful speech. Sometimes people say, “I don’t need to talk about my faith; I just live it.” In a way, that is true. We need to act on what we believe rather than just talking about it. At the same time, we must remember the importance of sharing God’s Word. When we do speak, however, we must remember that we can never lead anyone to Christ if we are rude. The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 4:29: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” Paul understands that because we are made in the image of God, we have great power in our tongues. Our words can be used as weapons to wound people or as tools to build them up. Through our words, we can develop beautiful relationships; at the same time, by our words, we can destroy precious connections. Someone once said that there are two words we should avoid when offering criticism: always and never. We need to avoid blaming our loved ones or those around us with phrases like “You never” or “You always.”

It is not enough simply to hold our tongues: we are called to build others up by speaking blessings over them. Think about our speech in our families this past week. How much of our speech has been used to bless our loved ones and those around us? As agents of God’s mercy, we need to speak words that strengthen others.

How do we cultivate that kind of speech? Jesus said in Matthew 12: 33-35, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good… A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him." Our words are simply the fruit of our hearts and the expression of what is stored inside us. The real goal we need to set is not merely trying to change our speech patterns, but filling our hearts with what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable, and dwelling on these things (Philippians 4:8). When our hearts are filled with God's truth, words that please God will naturally follow. We cannot do this in our own strength, but when we ask God to guard what we say, He gives us the power and wisdom to control our tongues. He will help us to speak words that build up rather than tear down in our relationship with others.

The third principle of being an agent of God's mercy is that we must value saving people over rigid rule-keeping. In our gospel text, the Pharisees were unhappy with Jesus' actions. To live a righteous life, they believed that they had to separate themselves completely from unrighteous environments. From a certain perspective, they had a point. In a general sense, Scripture does warn us that "bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33) and urges us to "hold on what is good" but to "reject every kind of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). For example, in the Old Testament, Joseph fled from temptation to keep his heart pure. The Pharisees likely used these principles to justify accusing Jesus of spending time with sinners. But please understand this: even though Jesus spent time with sinners and accepted them as they were, He never approved of their sinful lifestyles. When Jesus was asked whether to stone the woman caught in adultery, He did not look down on her or condemn her. Jesus protected her dignity by addressing her respectfully as "Woman"–or "Madam" in modern language–and after forgiving her, He told her to go and sin no more. Remember: God loves the sinner, even while His holy nature opposes all sin.

We often see conflict arise when people focus on judgment rather than redemption. Please don't get me wrong: I am not saying we don't need to distinguish right from wrong. There are civil laws to judge wrongdoings, and God has given us a conscience to discern truth from falsehood. What I am saying here is that, as agents of God's mercy, we need to help people by extending mercy rather than condemning their failures. In our society, we hear words of discouragement more than ever before. Think about this. Who is pleased when we adopt a judgmental attitude toward others? We know who the Bible calls the accuser: our spiritual enemy, Satan, is the only one who delights in unmerciful deeds and words. When we criticize and judge, we fall into the trap of fighting against people created in God's image–people Jesus died on the cross to save, just as He did for us. Remember Jesus' words in our gospel reading: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick… For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:12-13). Satan's strategy is to destroy God's work, target our faith journeys, and fracture our families and relationships. To be an agent of God's mercy, we must value saving people over rigid rule-keeping and condemnation.

From God's merciful perspective, rules are not nearly as important as relationships. Jesus echoed this truth in another conversation with religious leaders who accused His disciples of breaking the Sabbath because they picked heads of grain in the field. Jesus reminded them of King David and his companions, who ate the consecrated temple bread designated only for priests when they were hungry. They were shown grace because God's mercy responds to human need. As the Lord of the Sabbath, Christ teaches us that an act of mercy is far more valuable than the observance of ritual laws. Over the course of our lives, we have made numerous mistakes and experienced many failures. Think about how many times God has forgiven us! There is no way to comprehend the height and depth of His love. When we

remember His abundant forgiveness toward us, we can show genuine mercy to those around us from the bottom of our hearts.

Now, let us move on to our next question: Where are we supposed to show our mercy? Pastor Warren points out six specific opportunities for us to serve as agents of God's mercy: First, look for people in crisis and listen to them. Second, look for people with unmet needs and help them. Third, look for people who are grieving and comfort them. Fourth, look for people who need friends and show hospitality. Fifth, look for people who need a second chance and extend grace. Six, look for people who are rude and respond with kindness.

To illustrate this, I want to share the story of Conrad, the old cobbler… This story echoes Jesus' words about the Kingdom in Matthew 25:40. When the righteous ask when they saw Him hungry, thirsty, naked, or lonely, Jesus responds: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mind, you did for me?"

Conrad was looking for a grand, spectacular manifestation of God, but Jesus showed up in the ordinary needs of everyday people. That is exactly where our calling as agents of mercy begins—not in grand gestures, but in simple acts of love toward the people right in front of us. When we serve the least of these, we aren't just performing a good deed—we are serving Christ Himself.

Once again, every person around us is hungry for caring attention, truthful words, and genuine compassion. Jesus calls us to show His mercy to whoever God places on our path. As individuals, we cannot solve every problem in the world, but collectively as children of God, we can make a real difference in people's lives. Serving as an agent of God's mercy is central to fulfilling our purpose in Christ. Every follower of Jesus is called to be a servant. Daily, we face problems, worries, and discouraging thoughts. Our own wisdom, strength, and resources are not enough to defeat the powers of darkness. But we know that Jesus Christ disarmed the enemy when He died on the cross and rose again. When we feel discouraged or tempted to give up, we simply need to remember the mercy of Jesus. When we rest in His grace, we find the strength and courage to keep going

As I look ahead to turning 60 in a little over a year, I find myself understanding God's promises with new depth. In my thirties, I could work long hours without rest. In my forties, I felt strong and recovered quickly after a good night's sleep. Now, in my late fifties, I recognize my physical limits–and my doctor sees me more often! Physical energy naturally declines, but in our spiritual life, God's mercy continually renews our strength, enabling us to overcome life's challenges through His guidance and wisdom.

It is a great privilege to participate in God's kingdom mission. The Lord delights to see us willingly serving Him with our God-given talents and gifts. Whether our service seems big or small, the Lord sees it all, and He will honor it. Let us continue to live for God's holy purpose. Let us faithfully share God's greatest gift–Jesus Christ–with everyone we meet, especially the least of our brothers and sisters in our daily lives.

*In this message, I have drawn inspiration and outline materials from Pastor Rick Warren's sermon series "The Miracle of Mercy" (specifically on Matthew 9:1-13).