**Sermon Title: The Faithful of the Church in a Christ-less Culture**

**Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the leadership and membership to a biblical recognition of the faithful in the church.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 4 aspects of the faithful that will diffuse division in the church.**

**Introduction:** The matter of division is a critical issue in the church in the past and in the present time. The way leaders view themselves is important, but also the way the membership views leaders is important. What messages are necessary to be taught to combat this danger?

**I. The recognition of the Faithful. V.1**

**II. The requirement of the Faithful. V.2**

**III. The reflection of the Faithful. Vv.3-4**

**IV. The rule of the Faithful. V.5**

**I. The recognition of the Faithful. V.1**

 A. They are to be recognized as **servants**. V.1a

 Paul wanted everyone to view servants of God only as humble, chosen messengers God ordained.

 Paul expresses the humility of the position and task by using the word “huperetes,” a word literally meaning “under rowers,” referring to the lowest most menial and most despised galley slaves, who rowed in the bottom level of a ship.

 **1 Corinthians 9:16** For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

 **2 Corinthians 3:6** who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit1; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

 **2 Corinthians 4:1** Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

 **Ephesians 3:7** of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

 B. They are to be recognized as **stewards**. V.1b

 A steward is a person entrusted with and responsible for his master’s household e.g. buildings, finances, food, other slaves, servants, and stewards, and sometimes even children of the owner.

 **1 Timothy 3:15** but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

 **1 Peter 4:10** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

 1. The **responsibilities** of a steward.

 a. They are responsible for the master’s household.

 b. They are **appointed** to oversee other servants and stewards.

 c. They are to give an account to the master of the household and to the lead steward.

 d. They are **entrusted** with the master’s resources.

 e. They are to **manage** the master’s property for the master’s benefit. (glory)

 2. The **dangers** awaiting a steward.

 a. The danger of **acting** as if we are the master.

 b. The danger of **endeavoring** to please people.

 c. The danger of idleness, carelessness, and **apathy** in their service.

 d. The danger of misuse of **goods** and **gifts** for other agendas.

 e. The danger of **complaining** about fellow stewards.

 f. The danger of forgetting about the soon return of the Master.

 3. Rewards of a steward.

 **Matthew 25:23** "His lord said to him,`Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

 C. They are to be recognized as servants and stewards of the **mysteries** of God.

 **Acts 20:20** "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

 **Acts 20:22** "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

 **Acts 20:27** "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

**II. The requirement of the Faithful. V.2**

 The most essential quality of a steward or servant is obedient loyalty to his master and his master’s household agenda. (**Mathew 24:45-51**)

 **Colossians 1:25** of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

 **1 Thessalonians 2:4** But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

 **1 Timothy 1:11-12** according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. **12** And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry,

 **Titus 1:2**-3 in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, **3** but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;