**Sermon Title: The Priority of Christ in the Church, Part 1**

**Sermon Text: Colossians 1:24-27**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to a sincere understanding of God ordained ministry.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 4 Christ related priorities of the servants’ of God’s Ministry.**

**Introduction:** Paul warns the Colossians and all believers about their adoption of syncretistic beliefs that perverted the true message of the gospel, subsequently abolishing their hope. (v.5)

 Definition of Syncretism: “the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought.” [https://www.google.com/search?q=degine+syncretism&rlz=1C1DKCZ\_enUS779US779&oq=degine+syncretism&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i13l3j0i22i30l6.6464j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8]

Definition Religious Syncretism: Local deities could be identified with gods from the Greek pantheon. The Samaritans identified YHWH with Zeus under Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphones IV in the second century BC, and then with Jupiter. The result was partly to universalize local religions by cross-matching deities in one culture with the deities in another culture. [**Wright, N. T.; Bird, F. Michael; “The New Testament In It’s World”, p.144**]

“Thy Lycus valley does seem to have been a melting-pot of various religions, philosophies, and systems of magic, facilitating all kinds of syncretism.” [**Ibid., p.461**]

“The biggest lesson may be the importance of creating a Christ-culture in our churches. Christians often simply reflect the values and behaviors in their surrounding culture. As any experienced missionary will confirm, when a tribe or ethnic group becomes Christian, the people rarely get the whole package at once. More often than not, Christianity simply becomes an add-on to their existing worldview. This can result in a confused semi-Christian worldview, or, in the worst cases, syncretism.” [**Ibid., p.499**]

**I. The servant’s divine ministry to the church. Vv.23-24**

**II. The suffering servant’s ministry to the church. V.24**

**III. The servant’s stewardship ministry to the church. V.25**

**IV. The servant’s unique ministry to the church. V.26**

**I. The servant’s divine ministry to the church. Vv.23-24**

 The Gospel has no ethnic, cultural, or social boundaries. Having reached Rome, where Paul was when he wrote Colossians, it had reached the center of the then known world.

 A. The source of ministry to the church. V.23 (**Romans 26:12-19**)

 B. The appointment to ministry.

 **Acts 20:24** "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

 C. The methodology for ministry.

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

 D. The conclusion of ministry.

 **2 Timothy 4:7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

**II. The suffering servant’s ministry to the church. V.24**

 A. The **attitude** of the servant’s ministry. V.24a

 Paul rejoiced in his suffering related to fulfilling of his call by God to ministry on behalf of the church. Paul was currently in prison while writing. (**Acts 28:16, 30**)

 **Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

 **2 Corinthians 1:5** For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

 **Galatians 5:24** And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

 **Hebrews 12:2-3** looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

 B. The **afflictions** of the servant’s ministry. V.24b

 Believers are destined to experience the persecution that was experienced and meant for Christ. In spite of Jesus having been nailed to the cross and murdered, His enemies were not inflicting injury, ridicule, hostilities, and lies on Him, by now doing the same to His body.

 **Galatians 6:17** From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

 **Matthew 5:11-12** "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. **12** "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

 The church being the body of Christ, is the analogy for all professing Christians. The suffering of all true servants of Christ, benefits the church by promoting the spread of the Gospel about Jesus Christ. (**John 15:18, 24; 2 Corinthians 4:8-15; 6:4-10; 11:23-28; 12:9-10**)

 **John 16:1-3** "These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. **2** "They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. **3** "And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.

 **Philippians 1:13** so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

 **Philippians 1:29-30** For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, **30** having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me.

**III. The servant’s stewardship ministry to the church. V.25**

 This stewardship given to the servants by God, pertains and focuses on God’s plan for Gentiles to receive the message of salvation and to share in the inheritance of God’s people. The fulfillment of this God ordained role was to make this message fully known by preaching and proclamation.

 A steward was a slave or freeman who managed his master’s household:

 1. supervising the other servants

 2. dispensing resources, and

 3. the handling of household business and

 4. financial affairs.

 Every believer is to view ministry as a stewardship given to them by God.

 **1 Timothy 3:15-16** 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. **16** And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

 **Hebrews 13:17** Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

 **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.

 This will require a single-minded devotion and commitment, as modeled by Paul and his

 co-workers, in order to completely fulfill the stewardship God has given, and is and will hold each believer accountable for upon His return. Paul as a preacher did not refrain from preaching and proclaiming the whole counsel of God’s Word to those God had sent him to, or sent to him.

 (**2 Timothy 4:7**)

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

**IV. The servant’s unique ministry to the church. V.26**

 A. The **summation** of the unique mystery. V.26a

 The term mystery (**Colossians 1:27; 2:2; 4:3; Ephesians 3:3-9**) refers to something that was previously hidden in God’s plan, but has now been revealed.

 **Romans 11:25** For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

 **Ephesians 1:9** having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

 “Paul uses the word mysteries (musterion) not to indicate a secret teaching, rite, or ceremony revealed only to some elite group or (woke) people (as was practiced in the mystery religions), but truth revealed to all believers in the New Testament.” [**The MacArthur Commentary Colossians and Philemon, p.78**]

 B. The **Subject** of the unique mystery. V.27

 Here it relates specially to the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. (**Ephesians 3:8-13, 14-19**)

 **Romans 8:10** And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

 **2 Corinthians 13:5** Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?-- unless indeed you are disqualified. **Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

 **Ephesians 3:17** that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,