

DIFFERENT KINDS OF FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Mark 4:1-34

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: If asked, "what kind of animal are you most like?" Considering personality, physique, character, and general appearance to others, what animal would you identify yourself with? Often we identify others with various animals: sly as a fox, goofy as a monkey, stubborn as a donkey, messy as a pig, etc. So, what kind of an animal would you identify yourself with? What about different kinds of soil? Which soil does your life most closely resemble? Jesus told stories about different kinds of soil and the response the soils gave to receiving seeds. Followers of Jesus (believers) fall into several categories and Jesus' Parable of the Soils reveals four different kinds of followers.

I. THERE ARE FOLLOWERS WHO ARE INFLUENCED

1. *Mark 4:1-20*

2. All four kinds of "soils" (hearers-followers) who hear the Gospel message:

- Soil number one:
 - The "seed" falls on the path, a hard surface, used by the farmer to walk around the field.
 - The "seed" is the Gospel message.
 - The "birds" represent Satan who pick up the seeds because they couldn't penetrate the hard ground/surface, therefore producing no fruit.
 - This kind of soil represents a hard heart that does not allow the Word of God to get in.
 - These people don't think they need anything from God, they are in control, they are unteachable.
 - The Gospel falls on their deaf ears.
 - Do you know anybody who fits this description?

- Soil number two:
 - The "seed" falls on rocky ground, the "seed" being the Gospel, the Word of God.
 - The "sun" represents trouble, difficulties.
 - This soil produces no fruit either.
 - This soil represents a receptive heart but the message does not penetrate deep enough to cause any great change in that life.
 - These hearts (soils) are shallow in their understanding Christian things.
 - These people are affected by what they see other followers of Jesus doing.
 - When difficulties come a long, they back away because they have no root, they lack the closeness to Jesus that is necessary to produce fruit for Him.

- Soil number three:
 - The "seed" falls among thorns, the "seed" being of course the Gospel, the Word of God.
 - The thorns represent worldly cares, pleasures, desires for things.
 - This soil produces no fruit.
 - This soil represents a heart that is not focused on spiritual matters, a heart distracted by worldly cares and pleasures.
 - These people are interested but other things pull their interest away from the Lord to other matters.

- Soil number four:
 - The "seed" falls on good ground, the "seed" being the Gospel, the Word of God.
 - In contrast to the other three soils, this one produces lasting fruit in different measures.
 - This soil represents a receptive heart.
 - A receptive heart is the only attitude, kind of hearing that will receive the Gospel, the Word of God in the right manner.
- 3. Jesus calls His followers to a permanent, lasting response.
 - The right kind of response produces "fruit" the kind of "fruit" that pleases God.
 - So, how has the Word of God affected you? Which of the four soils would you say you are?

II. THERE ARE FOLLOWERS WHO INFLUENCE OTHERS

1. *Mark 4:21-34*

2. The purpose of the Gospel message is that it not be hidden away, but shared with others.
 - If the Gospel message has changed a follower's life, then that message must be shared, given away.
 - The purpose of the Gospel message is to bring hearers to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and then for those who have been saved to share it wherever they go and to whomever they meet.
3. Followers are to share the Gospel message with others, but they are not responsible for any resulting growth/salvation.
 - Those who spread the Gospel do not know the effect that their sharing will have on others.
 - Believers/followers are responsible for just scattering the seed, the Word of God.
 - The "seed" has the power of growth.
 - Farmers can only plant the seed and the rest is up to the ground and the seed.
 - Those who sow God's Word are not responsible for the growth of the hearers.
4. The potential of the seed, the Word of God is such that it will one day cover the entire world.
 - The parable of the mustard seed was told by Jesus.
 - The very tiny seed would produce a very large growth, a small tree, all from a tiny seed.
 - The glory of the Kingdom of God is coming, but there must be the sowing of the "seed" the Word of God first.
5. Stories are told about people who "hoard" things.
 - Some have died with others thinking the one who died was poor, a pauper, but upon going through that person's house and belongings, found hidden wealth, riches, all stored away by that person who refused to use what he/she had or to share it with others.
 - Sadly, many followers of Jesus are doing the same thing with the Gospel message. They received it, benefited from it, but have refused to share it with others - they have "stored" it away somewhere in their life.

CONCLUSION:

1. The seed is the Gospel Message.
2. The four soils are different ways of reacting to the Gospel Message.
3. The responsibility of those who benefit from the Word of God (saved) is to share the Gospel message.
4. The believer is to be an influence for the Lord Jesus Christ.