

## WHICH ONE ARE WE?

Coral and I went to the movies a couple of weeks ago and during the pre-show a public service announcement was shown that I had not seen in years. Apparently, etiquette amongst movie goers has been on the decline of late. Cineplex was beginning to hear a lot of complaints from their customers about movie goers texting on their phones or talking in loud voices during the show. Naturally this can be very disruptive to those customers who have paid good money to enjoy the experience. Cineplex decided in December to once again show a public service announcement encouraging people not to be a "Tommy Texter", or "Sally Soundtrack", or "Suzie Seat Kicker" during the movie.

A group of teenagers happened to be seated a few rows in front of us while this public service announcement was being played on the screen. One of the boys was talking out loud during the playing of it, and one of the girls was texting on her phone. Unfortunately, these two teenagers did not recognize they were doing the very things this public service announcement was discouraging patrons from doing so everybody could enjoy the movie.

A few minutes into the movie a couple who was sitting in front of this group of teenagers got up and moved down several rows to try to get away from hearing them talk out loud. About 10 minutes into the movie the teenage girl pulled out her phone and saw a text. She turned to her friends and said in a loud voice she had to leave because her mom was picking her up.

When she left, the texting stopped but the talking did not. The teenage boys got up and joined another group in the back row and continued talking out loud. We tried to tune out their voices, but it was hard not to be distracted by it. If "Tommy Texter" and "Sally Soundtrack" had listened to the public service announcement and realized it was referring to them, it would have been a more enjoyable experience for everyone.

This experience at the movie theater reminded me how sometimes we do not identify ourselves or our behaviour with something is being taught. This truth often comes out in stories we read in the Bible. One story where this is evident is in Jesus' telling of the "**Parable of the Four Soils.**" Back in Jesus' times, farmers would walk across a field and throw handfuls of seed onto the ground from a large bag slung across their shoulders. No matter how skillful they were, a farmer could not prevent some of his seed from falling on the footpath;

some from being scattered amongst rocks and thorns; and some being carried off by the wind. The farmer would throw the seed liberally with the hopes that enough would fall on good ground to ensure the harvest. Jesus used the four soils He spoke about in the parable to describe the different ways people respond to God's messages. The disciples did not fully understand the meaning of the parable, so Jesus explained it to them in this way:

**The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing in God's Word. The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's Word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's Word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted. (Mark 4:15-20)**

Jesus helped the disciples understand how these four soils represent different ways people respond to God's message. After reading Jesus' explanation, have we recognized ourselves in how we may be responding to God's messages? Perhaps after reading this, we realized how we have been different soils in responding to God's messages at various stages in our spiritual journey. Or maybe we identified that we tend to apply some of God's messages to certain areas of our lives, but resist doing so with others.

Jesus' desire from telling this parable was for people to strive to be like the good soil in every aspect of their lives. The two teens sitting in the movie theater failed to identify that they were the "Tommy Texter" and "Sally Soundtrack" and as a result ruined the experience for themselves and others, too. May we take this announcement from Jesus and recognize what kind of listener we are when it comes to God's Word so we will make life a more blessed experience for us and others.

**Keep Safe and God Bless,**

**Pastor Dean**