



**THOUGHTS FOR SUNDAY  
TRINITY 2  
13 JUNE 2021**

***Growth of the Kingdom of God***

Mark 4:26-34

Most of my railway career before I came to Derby to work at the Research Department was based in civil engineering drawing offices at different locations, York, King's Cross and Euston. I was involved with the design and construction of a range of works, bridges, electrification schemes, repair works, but they all, more or less, began with a drawing, even if there were some sums to be done along the way. Fortunately for me, drawing was the thing about work that I most enjoyed. I was never taught how to do it, I just picked it up along the way – this seems to me to be the basis of a liberal education! I don't have any examples of my work, they were all the property of the British Railways Board, but I can still feel the thrill of the blank sheets of draughting film, or linen, on the drawing board and working out where to start so that the finished drawing would be properly balanced. (I have a salutary example in mind of one case where a new retaining wall failed almost as soon as it had been built because the designer had begun his drawing too close to the bottom of the sheet, and the length of the new piles was far too short and had been determined not by a sum, but by the fact that he had reached the bottom border of the drawing sheet!) All the things that were built as a result of my designs, whether big bridges or small repairs, or schemes for many miles of electrification work, involved a vast array of other people, the contractors and other site staff, all the railway staff involved in making it safe for work to be carried out on the railway, all the finance, contract and administration staff who arranged for the letting of contracts, but they all started with a drawing, and they all demanded co-operation in achieving what the drawing shewed.

This thought sprang into my mind as I read today's gospel, which compares the growth of the kingdom of God to a tiny mustard seed. Those drawings of mine were like a seed, from which grew amazing things, certainly of utility, if not always of beauty.

(Often when starting work on a new job it was worth looking to see if there were any old drawings of what was there already. On one such hunt in the plan room at King's Cross, I came across a big cabinet full of drawings made in the late 1930s for an electrification scheme going north from King's Cross. The Second World War intervened, and the scheme was never built, so all those drawings never got beyond the 'seed' stage. There is a parallel there that I could usefully remember when next I preach on the Parable of the Sower!)

The matter of evangelism, the encouragement of the spread the good news of Jesus, of the kingdom of God, is much to the fore at the moment. There is certainly a focus on it at the heart of the current Derby Diocesan restructuring. If it was only an attempt to halt the fall in numbers attending church I would think it a hopeless task, but its real basis is a desire that more people should come to know Jesus and the love of God. As I have commented often before, the current plague has shewn up all sorts of inadequacies in the way society is organised, both in Britain and globally, and this comes on top of all the challenges of climate change. It is not hard to see how the message of God's love, and the attitudes and responses that flow from accepting it, might hold answers to resolving the problems that face us, but to bring about any change requires a sense of common purpose and co-operation in achieving it – not wholly dissimilar, on a much larger scale, to my bridge building projects of long ago. So let us bring our hopes and concerns for the future to God and ask that he will act through us and all people of goodwill to build up his kingdom.

Clive Lemmon