Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Congregational Lord's Day Worship for March 30, 2025

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel." – Proverbs 12:15



"*" = Please stand if you are able.

Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

Call to Worship – Isaiah 5:20-25

Leader: Woe to those who call evil good,

People: And good evil;

Leader: Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;

People: Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

Leader: Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes

People: And clever in their own sight!

Leader: Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine **People:** And valiant men in mixing strong drink,

Leader: Who justify the wicked for a bribe,

People: And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!

Leader: Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble

People: And dry grass collapses into the flame,

Leader: So their root will become like rot

People: And their blossom blow away as dust;

Leader: For they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts

People: And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Leader: On this account the anger of the Lord has burned against His people, and

He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down.

People: And the mountains quaked, and their corpses lay like refuse

in the middle of the streets.

Leader: For all this His anger is not spent,

People: But His hand is still stretched out.

Prayer of Invocation and Confession Gospel Absolution Text – 2Timothy 2:13

*Hymn #332 (red hymnal) - "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove"

Scripture Reading - Deuteronomy 11:31-12:14

Ancient Creedal Proclamation – Apostles Creed (pg#845 in the red hymnal)

Offerings Presented

[Please put your tithe/offering in the plates before or after the service – Thank you!] [Gifts labeled "Deacon's Fund go to aid those in need in the congregation.]

*Doxology #731 (red hymnal)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*Prayer of Dedication

*Sung Psalm #89A – "The Lovingkindness of the Lord"

Prayers of the Church & Lord's Prayer (sins)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Reformation Creedal Reading – Savoy Declaration, 26.3.

Leader: The purest Churches under heaven

People: Are subject both to mixture and error;

Leader: And some have so degenerated as to become no Churches of Christ,

Rev 18:2

People: But synagogues of Satan.

Rom 11:18-22

Leader: Nevertheless Christ always has had,

Matt 16:18

People:And ever shall have,Ps 72:17Leader:A visible kingdom in this world,Ps 102:28

Matt 28:19-20

People: To the end thereof,

Leader: Of such as believe in Him,

People: And make profession of His name.

Ministry of the Word

Prayer of Illumination

*Sermon Text – Judges 21:25

*Gloria Patri #735 (red hymnal)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Sermon – "Congregationalism & Presbyterianism, part 2 – Defining Terms" (A Mini-Sermon Series on Denominational Heritage & Direction)

*Hymn #32 (red hymnal) – "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

*Benediction

All are welcome for Fellowship & Food downstairs after Worship

Announcements

- The church would like to thank the Gabelmann's for hosting the Ladies Bingo Night.
- **New Members Classes** will start soon. If you are interested in joining the church, or have questions, please contact Pastor Doug.
- As of now, **Wednesday Study** will begin at the standard time of **6:30 PM**. Gen Alpha Club meets on the 2^{nd} & 4^{th} Wednesday.
- TRC is putting together a simple **Photo-Directory** for members and friends of the church.
 - It will include the following information: First & Last Name, Address, Phone Number,
 Email Address. (Children will be listed individually next to parents.)
 - If you don't want to be in the book, or to have some of your information not listed, then please email: trc.photobook@gmail.com
 - We would like include pictures. You can email in a picture you like or you can have your picture taken on a Sunday by Bryan & Kim Simmons.

To email in a picture, please send it to: trc.photobook@gmail.com

To schedule a Sunday to have a picture taken, email: kimsimmons7@optonline.net

- We hope to have all the information in by Easter (April 20th).
- There will be a review copy to check before we publish the Directory.

Upcoming Events

• Easter is on April 20th.

Regular Weekly Events

_		
Sunday	9:00 - c.10:00 AM	Sunday School Children's curriculum: KVB Publications Women's Study: Baucham's Expository Apologetics Adult Study: Westminster Larger Catechism
	10:30 - c.11:40 AM c.11:40 AM	Worship (Lord's Supper on the 1 st Sunday of the month) Coffee Hour Fellowship
Tuesday	10:30 AM - Noon	Tuesday Study (Evangelism in Acts) at Pastor Doug's house
Wednesday	6:30 - 8:00 PM	Wednesday Study (on Exodus) at Pastor Doug's house
Friday	6:30 - ??? PM	Young Adult Discussion Group at Pastor Doug's house (1st & 3rd Fridays)
Saturday	morning	Prayer Group at the Gabelmann's. (Please call Sheryl to confirm if the group is meeting that day, 860-309-7250.)

ONLINE RESOURCES

TRC's Webpage: TrinityReformedCT.org

TRC's Facebook Page: facebook.com/people/Trinity-Reformed-Church/61554974150922/

TRC's Youtube Channel:youtube.com/@TrinityReformedCTPastor Doug'syoutube.com/simplyreformedYoutube Channels:youtube.com/@PilgrimsofPlunder

INTERNET PRAYER CHAIN

If you have any prayer requests for our prayer chain, please email them to Donna Ensminger at: **trcnwprayer@gmail.com**. (If you would like to join the Prayer Chain, also see Donna.)

LEADERSHIP

Elders: Rev. Douglas Aldrich, pastor 860-379-1147 douglas_aldrich@sbcglobal.net

Bob Ensminger 860-485-8738 robert.ensminger@arthurgrussell.com

Rich Gabelmann 860-605-7852 rgabelmann0415@gmail.com Rev. Jonathan Haulenbeek 203-709-0784 jhaulenbeek@icloud.com

Deacons: David Mattson (chair), Carl Bierce, Caleb Goodell, Mason Goodell, Dean Winters

Sunday School: Verna Aldrich, Mason Goodell Music Coordinator: Cindy Rines

Clerk: Sheryl Gabelmann Treasurer: Cindy Rines

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Worship Starts At: 10:30 AM (9:30 AM in the summer)
Sunday Worship At: Winchester Grange (100 Newfield Rd; Winchester Center, CT 06098)
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 343; Riverton, CT 06065 - Phone: (860) 238-7399
Webpage: trinityreformedct.org - Email: trinityreformedct@gmail.com

Sermon Notes

Judges 21:25

"Congregationalism & Presbyterianism, part 2 – Defining Terms" A Mini-Sermon Series on Denominational Heritage & Direction) March 30, 202

Introduction

- 1) One of the most righteous generations in the Bible is the one that came out of wandering in the wilderness.
 - a) Joshua 5:6 "For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD, to whom the LORD had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey."
 - b) You remember the story (from the Book of Exodus):
 - i) God frees Israel, through the leadership of Moses, from slavery in Egypt.

Ex 19-20

iii) The people rebel and build the Golden Calf and are force to

ii) God's people receive the Law and the Ten Commandments at Sinai.

Ex 32

Ex 1ff

wander in the wilderness for 40 years.

2) After **purifying** Israel, that first generation that came out of the wildernes

- 2) After *purifying* Israel, that first generation that came out of the wilderness, lead by Joshua, entered into the Promised Land.
 - a) This most faithful generation (though not perfect) we read about in the Book of Joshua.
 - b) From a perspective of faithfulness, it is one of the most encouraging books in the Bible.
- 3) However, the generations that followed them increasing became more ungodly and self-focused.
 - a) They are described in the Book of Judges, when Israel was governed by Judges (e.g. Deborah, Gideon, Samson, etc.) and Israel frequently, and increasingly, goes astray.
 - b) One of the wonderful challenges of Judges is that it frequently doesn't directly tell you what people do wrong, especially the judges, assuming the reader knows God's word.

i)	Arguably the best judge is Deborah, yet Scripture tells	Is 3:12; Nah 3:13;
	us it is a curse to be ruled over by women, yet the	1Cor 14:34-35;
	Book of Judges never directly reminds us of this.	1Tim 2:12

- ii) Or, go read the special vow of holiness in the OT called the Nazirite

 Vow, and then go read about Samson, who is a Nazirite and breaks
 every single vow, yet the Book of Judges doesn't overtly tell you.

 (Yet for all his faults, Samson was a man of great faith.)

 Num 6:1-21

 Josh 13:5,24

 Heb 11:32
- 4) The main problem for the generations in Judges is described by a haunting Judg 17:6; 18:1; refrain that is repeated four times and is the very last line of the book. 19:121:25
 - a) Judges 21:25 "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
 - b) The fact we moderns hear this and think it is saying something good is a serious problem.
 - c) We Christians proclaim and should desire to live under the authority of the King and we certainty should not desire to do "what is right in our own eyes", right?
- 5) We are doing a mini-series on Congregationalism, Presbyterianism and denominations.
 - a) Last week we looked at the glorious origins of conservative Puritanism and the creation of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism, which are very similar.
 - b) Today: Have to define our terms, especially Congregationalism.
 - i) Has several definitions and changes over time.
 - ii) Next week: Why the fall?
 - c) This "sermon" is more of a historical lecture than sermon, which I apologize for.
 - i) We will return to expository preaching, our norm, very soon.
 - ii) However, to know our history, whether from the Book of Judges, or the history of Congregationalism, I think is very, very important for us.

"Presbyterianism" Defined

- 1) Small "p" *presbyterianism* is a form of church government:
 - a) It puts the emphasis on elders.
 - b) Both in a local church, usually called a "Session" or "elder board".
 - i) Regional gathering of elders, called a "presbytery."
 - ii) Or a national gathering of presbyteries called an "Assembly."
 - c) Small "p" presbyterianism almost assumes that there is a state church, which of course is presbyterian.
- 2) Big "P" *Presbyterianism* is a theological tradition.
 - a) So, all Presbyterians (tradition) believe in presbyterianism (government) but not all presbyterians (government) are Presbyterian (tradition)!
 - i) Many of the Dutch Reformed Tradition have presbyterian government, however, they wouldn't call themselves "Presbyterian" by the (Scottish/English Puritan) Presbyterian Tradition.
 - ii) While all Presbyterians of the Scottish/English Puritan tradition affirm both Presbyterianism as a tradition and believe in presbyterian government.

- b) Presbyterianism, as a tradition, has its origins in Scottish/English Puritans.
 - i) Especially that brief period when the Presbyterians control England during the Commonwealth of England, from 1649 to 1660 AD.
 - ii) During the Commonwealth of England the Westminster Assembly, a gathering of leading Puritan clergy, called "divines" created the great statements of the Presbyterian tradition called the "Westminster Standards":
 - Westminster Confession of Faith (1646 AD)
 - Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647 AD)
 - Westminster Larger Catechism (1647 AD)
 - <u>Directory of Public Worship</u> (1644 AD)
 - Form of Church Government (1645 AD)
- 3) Presbyterianism, flourishes in Scotland, where they have a state church.
 - a) Many Presbyterians immigrate to the United States in the 18th century, especially to the "Middle Colonies" (Delaware, New Jersey, New York & Pennsylvania).
 - b) For example, the Presbyterians created Princeton, in New Jersey, in 1746 to train their clergy.
 - c) Many American Presbyterians, because they had no state church, where in America, and had to defend against liberalism, become more democratic in their approach to church government, more congregational, but more about that latter.

"Congregationalism" Defined

- 1) Small "c" *congregationalism* is a form of **church government**.
 - a) It puts the emphasis on the local congregation.
 - b) The final authority is with the voting members of the local church.
 - c) The local church owns its church property.
- 2) Big "C" *Congregationalism* is a **theological tradition**.
 - a) All Congregationalists (tradition) believe in congregationalism (government), but not all who practice congregationalism (government) are Congregationalists (tradition).
 - Some traditions believe in a congregational form of government (e.g. Baptists, Evangelical Free, many American Lutherans) though they are not of the Congregational Tradition.
 - ii) So, a Missouri Synod Lutheran (a conservative American Lutheran denomination) believes in congregational government but would definitely say he is "not a Congregationalist" but would say his tradition is "Lutheranism."
 - b) However, if you ask most conservative Protestants of other traditions if they are a "Congregationalist" they usually will give a very strong reply.
 - i) Usually something like, "of course not, I actually believe in the word of God."
 - ii) Trust me, when I meet other believing clergy from other traditions and say "I'm a Congregationalist" I have to then prove I'm not some crazy heretic.
 - iii) Many of you have experienced this, when visiting other churches, and everyone looks at you when you say "I go to a Congregational church."
 - iv) Why? Because the term "Congregationalist" has greatly changed over time.

- 3) The broad definition of the "Congregational Tradition" refers to those who claim to come from the early English Puritans and believed in congregational government.
- 4) There are very different groups, however, that claim this tradition.
- 5) **Congregationalism as Separatism** It starts with the radical English Dissenters and Separatists called the Brownists beginning around 1560.
 - a) The most famous of these Brownists were the Pilgrims who founded Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts, in 1620.
 - b) Though later liberal Congregationalists would look to these Separatists as their forefathers, focusing on their desire for religious freedom and liberty, they (the later liberals) would ignore the Pilgrims strong theological commitment to orthodox doctrine and correct worship, because that would contradict their liberalism.
- 6) **Congregationalism as Conservative Puritanism** The true founding fathers of Congregationalism were the conservative Puritans who attended the Westminster Assembly and settled in New England and absorbed the Pilgrims into their ranks.
 - a) They believed in congregational government.
 - b) They also believed that elders should govern the daily affairs of the local church, local churches should gather for better governance, and were okay with a state church.
 - c) Don't believe me? Note the titles of the following chapters from Congregationalism's greatest statement of church government, the <u>Cambridge Platform</u>¹ of 1648:
 - Chapter 10 Of the Power of the Church and Its Presbytery (local Elder Board)
 - Chapter 15 Of the Communion of Churches One With Another
 - Chapter 16 Of Synods (regional gathering of elders)
 - Chapter 17 Of the Civil Magistrate's Power in Matters Ecclesiastical
 - d) These New England Congregationalists strongly rejected Separatism.
 - i) Making them very similar to Presbyterianism.
 - ii) The major difference is these Congregationalists believe the final say is with the local church, unlike the original Presbyterians.
 - e) These Congregationalists were also very creedal, creating such great documents to define the Congregational Tradition as:
 - i) <u>Cambridge Platform</u> of 1648 the great statement of congregational government.
 - ii) <u>Savoy Declaration</u> of 1658 the great statement of Congregational belief, which is a modified version of the <u>Westminster Confession</u>.
 - iii) <u>Westminster Shorter</u> & <u>Larger Catechisms</u>, which are taken directly from the Presbyterians because they don't mention church government.
 - f) This form of Congregationalism is what really establishes Congregationalism as a great influence in early America.
 - i) For example, it created Harvard in 1636 and Yale in 1701 to train its clergy.
 - ii) The Savoy Declaration was the official statement of faith for the colony/state of Massachusetts and Connecticut.
 - e) This form of Congregationalism is simply ignored by later Congregationalists because it contradicts liberal theology.

https://quintapress.webmate.me/PDF_Books/John_Cotton/The_Cambridge_Platform_v1.pdf

- 7) **Congregationalism as Theological Liberalism** For the vast majority this day and age the Congregational Tradition is synonymous with theological liberalism.
 - a) Most people think (correctly) that Congregationalism now are those beautiful white colony churches (created by the Conservative Puritan Congregationalists) that fly rainbow flags and have radical lesbian feminists as their "pastors".
 - b) Don't believe me?
 - i) Drive around Connecticut and look at the majority of the old Congregational churches.
 - ii) Or go to the largest Congregational denomination's website and look around. (The United Church of Christ www.ucc.org)
 - c) **Theological liberalism** is the pernicious anti-Christ heresy.
 - i) It believes the individual believer is the final authority.
 - ii) And that the Christian faith has to be updated to get with modern times.
 - d) Theological liberalism comes in many different forms and has been by far the most influential theological movement in modern Christianity, unfortunately.
 - i) From the militant rationalism of the 19th century that rejects the supernatural. (e.g. Of course, the virgin birth didn't happen because that isn't "scientific".)
 - ii) To the squishy pop-Evangelicalism of people like Joel Osteen and Rick Warren who claim to believe in conservative biblical Protestantism, and whose church might have what looks like a solid statement of faith, but in practice and preaching focus on being "practical" and "relevant" by growing the church through business philosophies and entertainment techniques and never prescribe either God's Law or Christ's Gospel.
 - e) Probably the best definition of theological liberalism comes from, until recently the second largest (now the third, because like the UCC they are dying), Congregational denomination, the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC).
 - i) Where the UCC is militantly woke and is culturally Communism.
 - ii) The NACCC holds to the older form of theological liberalism.
 - iii) If you go to NACCC's webpage section called "About US Understanding the Congregational Way" page, you will read: "This is a tradition (i.e. Congregationalism) that has deep convictions based upon the Word of God as each person interprets that Word according to the dictates of conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit."
 - iv) This sounds nice, however, is this not literally Israel's great sin in Judges?!
 - To paraphrase: "In these days there was no King in Congregationalism; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
 - v) Theological liberalism is an overt rejection of the God and that He has spoken.
 - If everyone's opinion about God are equally valid then God has not spoken.

Ex 20:1ff

- To believe this is to overtly reject the first four of the Ten Commandments which deal with how to love God.
- You are sounding a lot like Satan who said to Eve, "Did God really say . . ."
 Gen 3:1

https://www.naccc.org/about-us/about-congregationalism/

- vi) Besides, the liberals don't really believe this, they are hypocrites.
 - They actually demand conformity to their worldly dogmas.
 - Don't believe me? Try and go into a liberal Congregational Church and boldly preach sin and call them to repent and believe in the Gospel.
 - Because they not only reject God's Law then reject the Gospel, as seen by their redefining the Gospel as the "Social Gospel", i.e. engaging in a left wing political agenda.
- 8) Compare the NACCC statement with the <u>Savoy Declaration</u>.
 - a) NACCC "This is a tradition (i.e. Congregationalism) that has deep convictions based upon the Word of God as each person interprets that Word according to the dictates of conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit."
 - b) Savoy:
 - i) 1.1 "to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation; therefore it pleased the Lord . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the holy Scripture to be most necessary;"
 - ii) 1.7 "those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them"
 - iii) 1.9 "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold, but <u>one</u>), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly."
 - iv) 21.2 "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, not contained in it; so that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also."
 - (In other words, to believe in theological liberalism is to be against God, true freedom of conscience and even reason.)
 - c) This is not a minor dispute about secondary doctrines between brothers.
 - d) These are two different religions:
 - i) Orthodox biblical Christianity as described in the Savoy Declaration created by Conservative Puritan Congregationalists.
 - ii) Theological liberalism of the modern Congregationalists.
- 9) Congregationalism's fall into theological liberalism is so complete today that most people, including as taught by Congregationalists, equate Congregationalism and theological liberalism as the same thing.
 - a) Seeing theological liberalism as a different religion is not a new thing.
 - b) The great Presbyterian scholar, John Gresham Machen (1881-1937) described this problem in his great book <u>Christianity and Liberalism</u>.
 - i) Note the "and", these are different things.
 - ii) Also note, when this book was published: 1923.

- 10) Some of you might ask: What about the denomination called the CCCC (Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, created in 1948) and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary near Boston (created in 1888/9)
 - a) The CCCC was created, in 1948, by conservatives because Congregationalism had gone liberal.
 - i) They are officially a Bible believing conservative denomination.
 - ii) The CCCC is congregational in government but has never been officially Congregational in tradition (i.e. affirming Savoy & Cambridge).
 - iii) They are a generic evangelical in nature.
 - iv) In Pastor Doug's opinion the CCCC's is drifting into pragmatic pop-Evangelicalism.
 - They have female pastors.
 - They focus on church growth over doctrine.
 - They are currently moving to change their name from the "Conservative Congregational Christian Conference" to "Centerpoint"³, which I think speaks volumes.
 - Go check out their webpage, tell me what you think. (www.ccccusa.com/)
 - b) As for Gordon-Conwell, that seminary was never officially Congregational but a generic evangelical.
 - i) Unlike Westminster, which officially confesses the Westminster Confession.
 - ii) Pastor Doug doesn't know too much about the modern goings-on's in Gordon-Conwell Seminary, however, many think it has drifted to the left.

Conclusion

- 1) TRC rejects theological liberalism.
- 2) We believe the theology of our conservative Puritan Congregational forefathers is the best expression of biblical historic Christianity.
- 3) It seems like conservative Puritan Congregationalism is dead.
 - a) The closest thing is conservative Presbyterianism, which in American has taken on a more congregational element.
 - b) To figure out what we should do requires some work:
 - i) Have to know the history Last week's sermon.
 - ii) Need to define terms This week's sermon.
 - iii) Answer: Why did this happen? Next week's sermon.
 - iv) And: Where is this denominationalism in the Bible anyways?
 - Probably two weeks from now.

To be fair, the original motion to rename the CCCC to either "Centerpoint" or "Centerpoint Conference" was amended to "Centerpoint Biblical Congregational Conference". To have the first world of your denomination be changed from "conservative" to "centerpoint", however, is still very problematic.

- 4) In conclusion, let me ask:
 - a) Do we (TRC, the families here assembled, and as individuals) have a King?
 - b) Or, are we doing what is right in our own eyes?
 - c) Matthew 18:36-38a...
 - v.36 Jesus answered (Pilate), "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."
 - v.37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?"

Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"

- d) If you think truth is subjective, you are not in good company.
 - i) At best you are like Pilate.
 - ii) At worst you are like Satan.
- 5) But praise be to God! The King has spoken, and salvation is with Him alone.

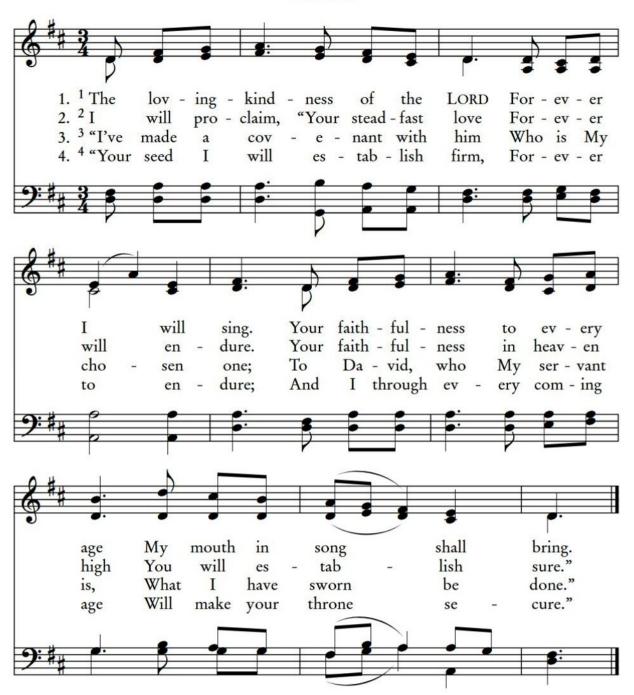
 And that is not a subjective opinion of individuals but the objective word of God!

89A Psalm 89:1-6

The Lovingkindness of the LORD

The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

-Luke 1:32



- 5. ⁵ The praises of Your wonders, LORD, The heavens shall express, In council of the holy ones Your faithfulness confess.
- 6. ⁶ For who in heaven with the LORD Could ever be compared?
 Among the ranks of angels great,
 Who has His likeness shared?

R.S. Taylor NEW JERUSALEM CM