

# Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Congregational

Lord's Day Worship for

November 16, 2025

*"But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases." – Psalm 115:3*



[trinityreformedct.org](http://trinityreformedct.org)

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“\*” = Please stand if you are able.

## Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

### Call to Worship – Ephesians 1:9-12

*Leader: He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention*

**People: Which He purposed in Him**

*Leader: With a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times,*

**People: That is, the summing up of all things**

*Leader: In Christ,*

**People: Things in the heavens and things on the earth.**

*Leader: In Him also we have obtained an inheritance,*

**People: Having been predestined**

*Leader: According to His purpose who works all things*

**People: After the counsel of His will,**

*Leader: To the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ*

**People: Would be to the praise of His glory.**

### Prayer of Invocation and Confession

#### Gospel Absolution Text – Matthew 11:25-30

**\*Hymn #64** – “God, the Lord, a King Remaineth”

### Scripture Reading – Isaiah 46:3-13

### 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 #115A** – “Not unto Us, 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 – Westminster Larger Catechism, Q#12.

**Leader:** *What are the decrees of God?*

**People:** **God's decrees are the wise,**

Eph 1:11

**Leader:** *Free,*

Rom 11:33

**People:** **And holy acts of the counsel of His will,**

Rom 9:14-15,18

**Leader:** *Whereby, from all eternity, He has,*

Eph 1:4,11

**People:** **For His own glory,**

Rom 9:22-23

**Leader:** *Unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time,*

Ps 33:11

**People:** **Especially concerning angels and men.**

## Ministry of the Word

### Prayer of Illumination

**\*Sermon Text** – 1Samuel 6:13-21

**\*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. Amen.*

**Sermon** – “God's Free Will”

A Sermon Series on 1Samuel 1-8

**\*Hymn #521** – “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less”

**\*Benediction**

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*Everyone is welcome to Coffee Hour Fellowship downstairs after church today*

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## Announcements

- The next **Lady's Study Luncheon** will be in **January**. The book is The Dawn of Redeeming Grace by Sinclair Ferguson (\$9.00) is in. If you are interested in the book please see Verna. There are extra copies available if you didn't sign up.
- Tuesday (Nov 25<sup>th</sup>) and Wednesday (Nov 26<sup>th</sup>) **Studies during Thanksgiving** week are **canceled**.
- Dave & Janelle Franceschetti have set up a gofundme page to help with the medical costs for **baby Caleb's** upcoming transplant surgery. You can go to: <https://gofund.me/95103c5b9>  
Or search for: “Help Caleb and Family During Transplant”.

## Upcoming Events

- Cindy Rines will be presenting a **piano recital** at her home (in West Hartland) on Saturday, **Nov 22 at 2:00 PM**. Space is limited so you are asked to please sign up on the sheet in the fellowship hall. There will be a time for snacks and fellowship following the recital. Pieces by Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin and various contemporary composers are included in the program.

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> **Annual Calvinist-Christmas Party** is Friday, **December 5<sup>th</sup>**, at 6:30 PM, at the Grange.
- The **Annual Meeting** will be after church on **December 14<sup>th</sup>**.
- *Regular Studies & Gatherings:*  
**Sunday School** for all ages (9:00 AM).  
**Tuesday Study** (10:30 AM – noon) – Augustine’s Sermons.  
**Wednesday Study** (6:30 – 8:00 PM) – Book of Hebrews.  
**Gen-Alpha Club** will return on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays.  
**Friday YADG** (6:30 PM) still meets on 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday.  
**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**

<b>TRC’s Webpage:</b>	TrinityReformedCT.org
<b>TRC’s Facebook Page:</b>	facebook.com/people/Trinity-Reformed-Church/61554974150922/
<b>TRC’s Youtube Channel:</b>	youtube.com/@TrinityReformedCT
<b>Pastor Doug’s</b>	youtube.com/simplyreformed
<b>Youtube Channels:</b>	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](mailto:trcnwprayer@gmail.com). (If you would like to join the Prayer Chain, also see Donna.)

### **LEADERSHIP**

<b>Elders:</b>	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
<b>Deacons:</b>	David Mattson (chair), Carl Bierce, Caleb Goodell, Mason Goodell, Dean Winters		
<b>Sunday School:</b>	Verna Aldrich	<b>Music Coordinator:</b>	Cindy Rines
<b>Clerk:</b>	Sheryl Gabelmann	<b>Treasurer:</b>	Cindy Rines

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### **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](http://trinityreformedct.org) – *Email:* [trinityreformedct@gmail.com](mailto:trinityreformedct@gmail.com)

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## **Sermon Notes**

1Samuel 6:13-21

“God’s Free Will”

Sermon Series on 1Samuel 1-8

November 16, 2025

## **Introduction**

1) Question: Does God have free will?

a) Free will is the ability to make choices according to one’s own desires or judgment.

b) There has been much debate throughout history about the relationship between God’s sovereignty and the responsibility of human choice.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> century = Augustine–Pelagius Controversy; 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> centuries = Semi-Pelagian Debate; 9<sup>th</sup> century = Gottschalk Controversy  
16<sup>th</sup> century = Luther vs. Erasmus; 17<sup>th</sup> century = The Arminian Controversy (especially “The Canons of Dort”)

- i) All Christians believe in both.
  - ii) The debate is where to put the emphasis.
- 2) We of the Reformed Tradition are famous (or infamous) for our strong commitment to the sovereignty of God.
  - a) Reformed Theology, if described in one word, has been: Theocentric. (God-centered).
  - b) Though we do believe humans make choices and are responsible for their actions.<sup>2</sup>
- 3) However, hardly anyone talks about God's will and especially God's free will.
- 4) Keep that in mind as we ponder today's sermon text.

## **1Samuel 6:13-21**

- 1) We are in the time of the Judges – A time of moral decline in Israel. Judg 2:10-19; 17:6; 21:25
  - a) The evil Philistines have captured the Ark of God, His throne on earth. 1Sam 4:3-11,17,21-22  
Ex 25:21-22; Num 7:89
  - b) God denigrated the Philistine idols and afflicted the Philistines with death and illness. 1Sam 5:1-12
  - c) The Philistines decided to return the Ark on a cart, pulled by cows, left to go their own direction. 1Sam 6:1-12
    - i) Miraculously, the cart heads directly back to Israel.
    - ii) On the cart, next to the Ark, is a box of gold items (in the shape of tumors and rodents) as a guilt offering unto the God of Israel.
- 2) The cart with the Ark goes to Beth-shemesh.
  - a) It is an Israelite town on the Philistine border.
  - b) "Beth-shemesh" means "House of the Sun", probably originally a pagan reference.
  - c) It belongs to the tribe of Judah. Josh 15:10-11
    - i) It is from Judah, a/the king will come. Gen 49:10
    - ii) David, Solomon, and finally Christ, will come from Judah. Ruth 4:18-22; 1Sam 17:12,16; 2 Sam 7:16  
1Kgs 2:45; Matt 1:6-7; Rev 5:5
    - iii) Though the Levites (the tribe from where the priests came from) lived there. Thus, they knew how to handle the Ark. 1Sam 6:19
- 3) It is the time of the wheat harvest. 1Sam 6:13
  - a) So, it is around late May, or early June, marking the end of the spring harvest.
    - i) It is a time of joy and thanksgiving. Ex 34:22; Deut 16:9-12
    - ii) Even more so when they see that the Ark has returned.
  - b) How does the song go, "*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. Glory, glory, hallelujah!*"

<sup>2</sup> A close study of the Westminster Confession is very helpful with this, especially the following chapters:  
Chapter 3 - Of God's Eternal Decree; Chapter 5 - Of Providence; Chapter 9 - Of Free-Will

- 4) The cart enters *“into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite”*. 1Sam 6:14
- a) This is not any famous Joshua, who lived many years earlier, but an Israelite land owner.
    - i) “Joshua” does mean “the Lord is salvation.”
    - ii) It is the Hebrew name for the Greek name “Jesus.”
    - iii) So, a poetic echo would not be wrong to hear here.
  - b) The Israelites’ first reaction is worship.
    - i) There is a large stone.
      - Early in OT history natural altars Gen 8:20; 12:7-8; 13:18; 26:25  
(not made with metal tools) were Ex 20:24-25; Judg 6:24-26  
used to worship the Lord.
      - Human workmanship cannot improve holy things.
      - No human glory is to attach to worship.
      - God alone chooses and provides the materials of sacrifice.
      - Tool-shaping introduces human will and design into what must be entirely God’s.
    - ii) They break up the cart to use the wood.
      - Why? They need fire.
      - Why the fire? So the cows could be given *“as a burnt offering to the LORD.”*  
– 1Sam 6:14b
- 5) The Levites take down the Ark. 1Sam 6:15
- a) Because only they have been Num 1:50-51; 3:6-10; 4:4-15  
commissioned to do such work. Deut 10:8; 1Chr 15:2,13-15
  - b) The Philistines’ offering of gold, as a Guilt Offering, are put on the stone too.
  - c) The cows are offered as a Burnt Offering and other sacrifices that day to God.
    - i) Burnt Offerings were a sacrifice where the entire animal Lev 1:3-17; 6:8-13  
was burnt on the altar as an act of total devotion, Gen 8:20-21; Ex 29:38-42  
atonement, and acknowledgment of God’s holiness. Num 28:1-8; Deut 33:10
    - ii) All the animal is burned to symbolize Gen 8:20-21; Ex 29:18; Deut 33:10  
complete surrender to God. Lev 1:9,13,17; Rom 12:1
    - iii) It was a sign of atonement (to be made morally right Gen 22:2-13; Ex 29:36  
with God) where sin is propitiated (God’s anger is Lev 1:3-4; 6:8-13  
turned away) through a substituted life. Job 1:5; Heb 10:5-10
    - iv) They were part of regular worship - offered Ex 29:38-42; Num 28:1-8  
morning and evening, anchoring Israel’s 2Chr 13:11; Ezra 3:3  
continual dependence on God. Ps 141:2; Dan 8:11
    - v) And as in our sermon text, occasional acts of Gen 8:20; Ex 24:5; Lev 8:18  
consecration — used in covenant ceremonies, 1Sam 6:14; 7:9  
national crises, and personal devotion. 1Kgs 8:62-64; Ezra 8:35
  - d) The people bring their own burnt offerings, as we read in the text: *“and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that day to the LORD.”*  
– 1Samuel 6:15b

- 6) The five lords of the Philistines see this and return back to their land.  
a national acknowledgment of God's judgment and sovereignty. 1Sam 6:16-18a
- 7) The large stone remained, in OT times, as a witness to what God had done.  
Testifying that God Himself has returned. 1Sam 6:18b
- 8) All is not perfect, however, some of the "men of Beth-shemesh" look into the Ark. 1Sam 6:19-21
  - a) This is a direct violation of God's commandments and an affront to His holiness.
    - i) To violate holy things brings death. Ex 19:21-22; Lev 10:1-2; Num 4:15,20  
2Sam 6:6-7; Heb 10:26-31
    - ii) Thus, even seeing or touching holy things is sin. Num 4:15,20
    - iii) Even the OT priests must avoid direct sight. Lev 16:2,13
  - b) Therefore, God kills 50,070 men.
  - c) Note the correct reaction to this:
    - i) 1Samuel 6:20 – *"The men of Beth-shemesh said, 'Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?'"*
    - ii) The answer, of course, is no sinful human.
  - d) The people of Beth-shemesh sent word to the people of Kiriath-jearim to come take the Ark.
    - i) As we will soon read the men of Kiriath-jearim are more godly. 1Sam 7:1ff
    - ii) It is also the link to the first great king of Israel: David. 2Sam 6:2; 1Chr 13:5-6
- 9) Do you hear God's will, God's free will, throughout this story?

## **God's Will**

- 1) Because God is a "living" entity then He has a will.<sup>3</sup> Gen 6:6; 18:17-19; Deut 32:39; Ps 115:3; Is 46:9-10 Dan 4:35  
Matt 11:25-27; 16:16; Eph 1:11; Heb 3:12; 10:31; 12:12
  - a) So, God can make choices and act according to His purposes.
  - b) He has the power of control over His actions and emotions.
- 2) God's will is **Necessary**.
  - a) God cannot deny Himself, but He must act consistently with His own nature.
  - b) His will is identical with His being, wisdom, goodness and all His attributes.
    - i) He will always be faithful. 2Tim 2:13
    - ii) He cannot lie. Heb 6:18; Num 23:19; 1Sam 15:29
    - iii) He cannot tempt nor can be tempted. James 1:13
    - iv) He does not change His mind. 1Sam 15:29
    - v) He does not (need to) repent.<sup>4</sup> Num 23:19
  - c) We see this in our sermon text where God has to punish those who defiled the Ark, offended His holiness and violated His commandments.

<sup>3</sup> Historically the Church has said God has one divine will, yet Christ has two wills - one divine and one human.

<sup>4</sup> Some scriptures speak about God "changing His mind" or even "repenting". (Gen 6:5-7; Ex 32:9-14; 1Sam 15:11; Jonah 3:10; Amos 7:3-6). This shows His revealed will that He hates evil, yet in His secret will there is no change.

d) This also challenges our notions that “free will” means “I can do anything I want.”

i) The Bible does not say “God won’t lie” it says He “cannot lie.” 2Tim 2:13; Heb 6:18

ii) Being able to sin is not freedom.

- That is actually slavery.

iii) Will you have perfect free will in heaven?

Of course!

- Will you be able to sin in heaven?

Of course not.

- What does that tell you about free will?

3) God's will is **Transcendent**.

a) God's will is not limited by space or time.

1Kgs 8:27; Is 40:12-26; 66:1

b) His will is constantly active in His creation.

Is 42:9; 2Cor 5:17; Rev 21:5

c) He upholds and has all things before His mind,  
according to His purpose.

Dan 4:34-35; Eph 1:11

d) His will is **immutable**  
(unchangeable).

2Pet 3:8; Num 23:19; Ps 33:11

Mal 3:6; James 1:16-18

e) God's will is **simple** (He is never of “two” minds).

Matt 10:29-30

f) God's will is **impassible**.

i) God’s will is not controlled by feelings or events.  
(Like ours.)

ii) If God has feelings, He willed them before creation.

iii) That is why the creeds will sometimes say God does not have “emotions.”

- True, the Bible shows that God grieves (Gen 6:6), has anger (Ex 32:10), compassion (Ps 103:13), love (Deut 7:7-8), jealousy (Ex 34:14), hatred (Ps 5:5), delight (Ps 147:11), displeasure (2Sam 11:27), rejoices (Deut 30:9), etc.

- Let alone all the emotions the Lord  
Jesus shows since He is fully human.

Matt 9:36; Mark 3:5; Luke 19:41

John 2:15-17; 11:35; Heb 4:15

- And you can grieve and insult the Holy Spirit.

Eph 4:30; Heb 10:29

iv) Impassibility is about God not being controlled by emotions.

v) God is controlled by His perfect holy will and thus is always consistent  
and can be trusted.

g) We see this in our sermon text:

i) The Ark returns without human help.

ii) God chooses the resting place of the Ark.

iii) God provides His own sacrifice.

iv) God’s wrath, and mercy, is found throughout this text.

v) Do you hear Christ in these things?

4) God's will is both **Revealed & Secret**.

- a) Probably the clearest verse about this is Deuteronomy 29:29 – *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”*
- b) God's **Revealed Will** is His publicly given revelation of Himself in Scripture, including His acts and commands. Deut 29:29; Ps 19:7-11; Mic 6:8  
Matt 7:21; 12:50; John 4:34; 7:17  
Rom 12:2; 1Thes 4:3; 2Tim 3:16-17  
Heb 1:1-2; 1Pet 1:23-25; 2Pet 1:20-21
- i) It is also called His Preceptive Will, Prescriptive Will, or Legislative Will.
- ii) God's revealed will is found in His Word by His Spirit.
- iii) We see this especially in God's Law, the do's and don'ts, His commands.
- iv) We see this in our sermon text on how God is to be worshiped, and how the Ark is handled.
- c) God's **Secret Will** is God's eternal, sovereign decree by which He determines all things, known only when He brings it to pass. Gen 50:20; Deut 29:29; Prov 16:4,9; 19:21  
Is 14:24,27; 46:9-10; Dan 2:21; 4:35  
John 6:38-39; Acts 2:23; Rom 9:18-23; Eph 1:11
- i) It is also called His Decretive, Sovereign, Hidden or Efficacious Will.
- ii) History, on some level, reveals His secret will.
- For example: The OT saints didn't know how long the Philistines would have the Ark until it returned in 7 months. 1Sam 6:1
  - Or, when the end times will happen, which is intentionally kept secret from us. Matt 24:36; Rom 11:33-34  
Dan 4:17,25,32,35
- iii) Why God decrees things to fall out the way they do is solely by His will and He frequently doesn't tell us why it happens – besides it is by His good will.
- d) For the saints, this should encourage holiness and faithfulness.
- i) For example, what should be your reaction if someone burnt your house down?
- ii) You can be offended because arson is evil and against God's revealed will.
- iii) You can rest in the fact that God, on some level, it was planned for good as part of God's secret will.
- No one was killed.
  - You can be thankful that God has provided you the church, the fire department, the police, the insurance company, etc. to aid you.
  - You can trust that it had some greater purpose for good, though you might not understand that until heaven.
- iv) Isaiah 45:7 – *“The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.”*
- v) In 1Samuel 6 the Philistines realize that the “evil” that befell them was from the holy, righteous God.
- e) Thus, in any “evil” event there is man's will to evil and God's will to good.
- i) From our sermon text, evil men looked into the Ark, this will cause it to go to a better town.



- ii) Think of the great evil Joseph's brothers did to him.
    - Yet what was Joseph's response in the end?
    - Genesis 50:20 – *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."*
  - iii) Let alone all of creation and the fall itself.
    - Romans 8:20-21 – *"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God."*
  - iv) Through great evils comes many goods: Perseverance, proven character and great blessing – hope. Rom 5:1-5
  - v) Is not the purpose of all of history, the cross of Christ, which at the same time is the most evil, and the most glorious event ever? Acts 2:23; 4:27-28  
Gen 50:20; Rom 5:8  
1Cor 1:18; 2Cor 5:21
- 5) God's will is **Free**.
- a) It is free from the bondage of sin. Ps 5:4; 92:15; Rom 9:14
  - b) God does what He wants for His purposes. Ps 33:11; 115:3; 135:6; Dan 4:35
    - i) He created all things for His glory. Rev 4:11
    - ii) Creation, preservation & salvation are His free acts. Eph 1:5,9,11
    - iii) God has to react to sin but doesn't have to save. Deut 4:24
    - iv) Salvation is solely because of His love and gift of free grace. Eph 2:1-10
  - c) Sinful man tries to restrict God's (revealed) will.
    - i) Yet even this is by God's (secret) will.
    - ii) To bring about redemption through His Son.
    - iii) All for His glory.

## **Conclusion**

- 1) *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."* – John 6:37-40
- 2) *"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* – 1Thessalonians 5:16-18