

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Congregational

Lord's Day Worship for

March 22, 2026

"Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God." – 2Corinthians 9:10-11



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“*” = Please stand if you are able.

Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

Call to Worship – James 1:17-21

Leader: *Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of lights,*

People: **With whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.**

Leader: *In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth,*

People: **So that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.**

Leader: *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear,*

People: **Slow to speak and slow to anger;**

Leader: *For the anger of man*

People: **Does not achieve the righteousness of God.**

Leader: *Therefore, putting aside all filthiness*

People: **And all that remains of wickedness,**

Leader: *In humility receive the word implanted,*

People: **Which is able to save your souls.**

Prayer of Invocation and Confession

Gospel Absolution Text – 1Peter 1:23

***Hymn #457** – “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

Scripture Reading – Proverbs 4:17-27

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 #1A** – “That Man Is Blessed”

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#13.

Leader: *What has God especially decreed concerning angels and men?*

People: **God, by an eternal and immutable decree,**

Leader: *Out of His mere love, for the praise of His glorious grace,
to be manifested in due time,*

People: **Has elected some angels to glory;**

1Tim 5:21

Leader: *And in Christ has chosen some men to eternal life,*

Eph 1:4-6

People: **And the means thereof:**

2Thes 2:13-14

Leader: *And also, according to His sovereign power,
and the unsearchable counsel of His own will,*

Rom 9:17-18,21-22

People: **Whereby He extends or withholds favor as He pleases,**

Matt 11:25-26

Leader: *Has passed by and foreordained the rest to dishonor and wrath,
to be for their sin inflicted,*

2Tim 2:20

Jude 4

People: **To the praise of the glory of His justice.**

1Pet 2:8

Ministry of the Word

Prayer of Illumination

***Sermon Text** – Matthew 13:1-9,18-19

***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 – “The Parable of the Sower, part 1 – The Hardened Road”

A Sermon Series on Parables

Ministry of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Invitation & Warning

TRC practices guarded open communion. All who profess faith in Christ, have been baptized, have a basic understanding of this sacrament, and are in good standing with a biblical local church are welcome to the Lord's Table. If you are uncertain whether you should partake, it is wise to abstain and speak with the pastor afterward.

Prayer

Words of Institution – Matthew 26:26-28 + Luke 22:19-20; 1Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:26

“While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.’ . . . Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.”

Partaking of the Bread and then the Cup

Prayer of Thanksgiving

***Hymn #449** – “We Rest on Thee”

***Benediction**

Announcements

- **Warning:** Fake emails/texts have been going out in the name various members of the church including Pastor Doug and David Mattson. Do NOT trust, or even reply, if anyone asks you to reply, call, or send things. When in doubt – do not reply, if you have questions call the person.
- TRC needs help with two **ministries** it would like to create.
 - 1) Is anyone willing to **visit shut-ins** once a month for about an hour or so?
 - 2) Does anyone have any thoughts on how TRC can support **Christian home-schooling**?
If you are willing to serve, or have questions, please see Pastor Doug.
- Pastor Doug will be teaching the **children's Sunday School** class on March 15th & 22nd explaining the Gospel and the Lord's Supper. Jon will be teaching the adult class.

Upcoming Events

- **April 24th**, Friday, there will be a **Pot-Luck Game Night** starting at 6:30 PM at the Aldrich's.
- The next in-person **Elder-Deacon meeting** is on Saturday, **May 16th**, from 8:00-10:00ish AM, at the Aldrich's.
- **June 20th**, Saturday, there will be a **Pot-Luck Picnic** starting at noon at the Ensminger's. (100 Hallow Rd, Winchester, CT) If possible, please bring a side, drink or a dessert. Hot dogs & hamburgers will be provided. (Rain Date: June 27th)
- **July 18th**, Saturday, there will be a **Pool Party / Picnic Pot-Luck** starting at noon at the Gabelmann's. Sandwich platters, beverages and an ice cream bar will be provided. If possible, please bring a pot-luck food item. (We will gather rain or shine.)
- **October 10th**, Saturday, there will our annual **Oktoberfest** at the Aldrich's. If possible, please bring a food item. (Rain Date: October 17th)
- *Regular Studies & Gatherings:*
 - Sunday School** for all ages (9:00 AM) at the Grange.
 - Tuesday Study** (10:30 AM – noon) – Augustine's Sermons, at Pastor Doug's house.
 - Wednesday Study** (6:30 – 8:00 PM) – On 2nd & 4th: Thessalonians. On other: Free discussion.
 - Gen-Alpha Club** 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, at Pastor Doug's house.
 - Friday Young Adult Discussion Group** (6:30 PM) meets on 1st & 3rd Friday, at Pastor Doug's house.
 - 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

<i>TRC's Webpage:</i>	TrinityReformedCT.org
<i>TRC's Facebook Page:</i>	facebook.com/people/Trinity-Reformed-Church/61554974150922/
<i>TRC's Youtube Channel:</i>	youtube.com/@TrinityReformedCT
<i>Pastor Doug's Youtube Channels:</i>	youtube.com/simplyreformed 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

<i>Elders:</i>	Rev. Douglas Aldrich, pastor	860-379-1147	douglas_aldrich@sbcglobal.net
	Bob Ensminger	860-485-8738	robert.ensminger@arthurgrossell.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 **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

Matthew 13:1-9,18-19

“The Parable of the Sower, part 1 – The Hardened Road”

A Sermon Series on Parables

March 22, 2026

Introduction

- 1) Today, let’s look in detail at the most important parable in the Bible.
- 2) As the Lord Jesus taught, “*Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?*” – Mark 4:13
- 3) First, a quick reminder:
 - a) The parables given by Christ were proclaimed during His earthly ministry before the cross.
 - b) Parables were *NOT* given as a simple teaching method for easy learning.
 - c) Parables are *NOT* systematic in-depth studies of a subject.
(Hares do not really race tortoises in the wild.)
 - d) Parables were given to bring judgment, to show the hard-hearted nature of fallen man.
 - e) *Definition:* Parables are brief fictional analogies drawn from ordinary life that usually convey a single central universal truth.
- 4) Let’s first hear the story.

The Story

Matt 13:1-8 (Mark 4:4-8; Luke 8:5)

- 1) A sower goes out to sow. Matt 13:3; Mark 4:3; Luke 8:5
- 2) The seed he sows falls on four different types of ground:
 - a) #1 – Beside/On the road where it is trampled under foot and eaten by birds. Matt 13:4; Mark 4:4
Luke 8:5
 - b) #2 – Rocky places that have little soil, and no moisture, so the seed springs up but with the sun it is scorched, and withers because it has no root. Matt 13:5-6
Mark 4:5-6
Luke 8:6
 - c) #3 – Thorns, which choke the seed when they try to grow and thus yield no crop. Matt 13:7
Mark 4:7; Luke 8:7
 - d) #4 – Good soil, which produces a crop: Some 100, 60 or 30 fold. Matt 13:8
Mark 4:8; Luke 8:8
- 3) One of the difficulties of reading the Bible, especially parables, is that it is easy to get distracted and ask questions the text is not focused on.
 - a) Most of the questions our modern fallen brains ask about a difficult text is usually not the focus of the text. For example:

- i) Where are the dinosaurs in Genesis 1-3?
 - ii) Who are the spirits in prison in 1Peter 3:19?
- b) We should wrestle with Scripture, like Jacob wrestling with God (a pre-incarnate Christ?) in Genesis 32:24ff.
 - i) We should ask questions.
 - ii) However, if we desire to be faithful to God, and to hear Scripture correctly, we must first hear what the text is calling us to focus on.
 - iii) Lest we, at best, major in the minors.
 - iv) Or at worst, mishandle the Scriptures, which is a sin. Matt 22:29; 2Tim 2:15; 3:16-17
James 3:1; 2Pet 3:16; Rev 22:18-19
- 4) The Parable of the Sower is first and foremost, about the Word of God.
 - a) The focus is on Christ, His Gospel, His Work, and His Kingdom.
 - b) And His effect on different types of human hearts.
 - c) Like all Scripture you have to first take a God-centered perspective.
 - i) Not focused on (supposedly) self-autonomous consumers, i.e. ourselves and the people we like.
 - ii) But upon God, and His Son, and the establishment of His Kingdom through His Word.
- 5) Remember last week's sermon.
 - a) After this parable the disciples ask Christ "*Why do You speak to them in parables?*" – Matthew 13:10.
 - b) The answer is *NOT* about trying to teach in a simple understandable way.
 - c) It is the exact opposite.
 - i) Only the Apostles receive the mysteries of the Kingdom before the cross.
 - ii) That judgment has come.
 - iii) Which fulfills the prophecy of judgment of Isaiah. Is 6:9ff
 - iv) And that God's Kingdom of a New Covenant, is about to be established.
- 6) Graciously, our Lord explains this parable for us!
- 7) Today, we will look only at the first soil.

The Sower and the Seed

- 1) Clearly our focus should start with the Word of God.
 - a) Look at how each Gospel begins this parable:
 - i) Mark 4:14 – "*The sower sows the word.*"
 - ii) Luke 8:11 – "*Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.*"
 - iii) Matthew 13:18-19a – "*Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom . . .*"
 - b) So, then the **Sower** is He/he who **proclaims the Word of God**.
 - c) The **Seed** is the **Word of God** that is about God's Kingdom.
 - d) Let's unpack each of those terms.

- 2) The **Sower** are those who proclaim the Word of God.
- a) Thus, the sower can be many different people. However, in our thinking there should be a hierarchy, a listing, of who we first think the sower is:
 - b) First and foremost, the Sower is Jesus Christ, Who is literally the Word incarnate. Is 61:1-2; John 1:1,14; 12:49-50; Phil 2:6-7
Col 2:9; Heb 1:1-3; 1John 1:1-2; Rev 19:13
 - c) Then His Apostles who will complete Scripture. Matt 28:19-20; Mark 4:14; Luke 8:11
John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:16; 6:4; Rom 10:14-15
1Cor 2:12-13; 3:6-9; 1Thes 2:13; 2Pet 3:2,15-16
 - d) Then those ordained by Christ's church to preach the Word, such as pastors, elders, evangelists, etc. Matt 28:19-20; Acts 6:4; 20:28
1Cor 3:6-9; Eph 4:11-12
2Tim 2:2; 4:2; Titus 1:5-9
 - e) Finally, in the broad sense, all Christians. Matt 5:16; 10:32-33; Acts 1:8; Col 4:5-6; Jude 3
 - i) Not that they are commissioned to preach. 1Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11-12
 - ii) But we are to be "*ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.*" – 1Peter 3:15b
- 3) The **seed**, which is the **Word**, is the proclamation of Christ, His Gospel, His coming work on the cross, and the establishment of the New Covenant. Jer 31:31-34; Matt 26:28
Luke 24:26-27,44-47; John 5:39
Acts 10:43; 1Cor 15:1-4
- 4) The **Kingdom** is where the King directly reigns. Luke 17:20-37
- a) Which is **already** because Christ is physically present before His disciples during His earthly ministry and after the cross with His reign in heaven and the sending of His Spirit. Ps 2:6-8; 110:1-2; Dan 2:44
Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 12:28
Luke 17:20-21; Acts 2:32-36
Eph 1:20-23; Col 1:13-14; 2:15
 - b) And **not yet** because the consummation of the Kingdom will come at the end of the age when Christ returns in power and glory to establish the new heavens and the new earth. Matt 24:30-31; 25:31-34
Luke 17:22-37; Acts 1:11
1Cor 15:24-28; 2Tim 4:1
Rev 1:7; 20:11-15; 21:1-4
- 5) The rest of the parable is the effect of the Word on human hearts.
- a) Like seed landing on different types of soil.
 - b) Remember the biblical word for "heart" does not mean "emotion." Gen 6:5; Deut 6:5; 1Sam 16:7; Prov 4:23
Jer 17:9-10; Matt 22:37; Mark 7:21-23
 - i) It is the whole "inner being" including the mind, will, soul, spirit, thoughts, emotions, etc.
 - ii) With the most important being the "mind" which controls one's understanding, will and actions. Prov 23:7; Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30
Luke 10:27; Rom 8:5-7; 12:2
Eph 4:17-18,23; Phil 4:7-8; Col 3:2
- 6) The effect of the Word on various types of hearts, i.e. the soils, is what the Parable of the Sower is all about.

Soil #1 – The Road

- 1) The road imagery is striking.
 - a) It is hardened, heavily trafficked, and so compact nothing can grow.
 - b) This is the hardened heart, so compacted by sin and worldliness that it is impenetrable to the Word.
 - c) The seed is trampled underfoot and the birds come and eat the seed. Matt 13:4; Mark 4:4
Luke 8:5

2) It is critical to remember we do not start off this life as good or even morally neutral (i.e. a clean slate).

- a) Yes, we, mankind are made in the image of God. Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-2; 9:6
1Cor 11:7; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10
- b) But we are all fallen. Gen 3:6-7; Ps 51:5; Rom 3:10-12,23; 5:12
Eph 2:1-3; 1Cor 15:21-22; Titus 3:3
- c) From the moment of conception humanity is, by our fallen nature, dead in their sin, a child of Satan, and an enemy of God. Gen 8:21; Ps 51:5; 58:3; Matt 7:11
John 3:6; 8:44; Rom 3:10-12,23; 5:10-12
1Cor 2:14; 15:22; Eph 2:1-3; 4:17-19
- d) This is so critical to understand.
- i) If you get sin wrong, you will get everything else wrong.
 - ii) The more you water down sin the more delusional you became, and you are actually confirming the prophecy of the Parable of the Sower.
 - iii) And the more you will water down Christ, His Cross, the Gospel, and His Kingdom.
 - iv) The more you will water down faith, hope and love.
 - v) And this is one of the great warnings of this parable.

3) Besides being born fallen, the world constantly hardens the unbeliever's heart.

- a) It aggressively attacks Christ's Word and His Kingdom.
- i) Which will continue until the end of the age. Matt 24:9; John 15:18-20; 16:33
Acts 14:22; 2Tim 3:12; Rev 12:17
 - ii) This shows God's justice when He judges. Gen 18:25; Ps 51:4; Is 5:16
Rom 1:18-20; 3:5-6; 9:22
 - iii) And it is a blessing for the saints because it strengthens and shows God's grace working on them when they respond in faith. Matt 10:38; John 15:20
Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17
Phil 1:29; 1Thes 3:3
2Tim 3:12; 1Pet 2:21; 4:19
 - Philippians 1:29 – *“For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”*
 - Acts 14:22b – *“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”*
 - John 15:20 – *“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”*
 - iv) You don't like this?
 - You desire an easy faith? One with no cost? No afflictions or persecutions? You worry what the world will say about you? You desire wealth, worldly temptations, riches and pleasure?
 - Are you saying your heart is on the hardened road, rocky places, or among thorns?
 - See how challenging parables really are?
 - And why the Sower is the most important parable.
- b) The world also hardens hearts by demanding the exclusion of Christ and presenting it as neutrality, though in truth it is opposition to God. Ps 2:1-3; 14:1-3; Prov 1:24-25
John 3:19-20; 15:18-19
Rom 1:21-23; 8:7-8; 1Cor 2:14

- i) Do you actually think turning your children over to “secular” schools that never mention Christ will have no impact on them? Deut 6:6-7; Prov 22:6
Eph 6:4; Col 3:21
2Tim 3:14-15; Titus 2:4
- ii) Do you actually think you can study the creation (i.e. science) without reference to the Creator? Ps 19:1-4; Prov 1:7; 9:10;
Rom 1:19-20; Col 1:16-17; Heb 11:3
- iii) Do you actually think anyone can talk about morality without referencing God’s Holy Law? Ex 20:1-17; Deut 4:8; Ps 19:7-9
Rom 2:14-15; 3:19-20; James 2:10-12
- iv) Do you actually think the Gospel is just an optional thing? Matt 6:33; 28:19-20; Mark 16:15
Rom 1:16; 1Cor 2:2; 15:1-4
(E.g. My friend/family member is a “good person” even though they don’t go to church, all the while defining “good” because they are nice to you, and not by God’s standards.)
- v) Do you actually think you can make the Bible “say anything you like” and thus you can ignore the church’s proclamation of it, all the while assuming your words are clear and knowable? Deut 29:29; 30:11-14
Ps 19:7; 119:105
Is 55:10-11; 2Tim 3:16-17
Heb 1:1-2; 4:12; James 1:21-25
- c) The world, and its prince (Satan) has, and is, and will, trample down a fallen heart.
- 4) Not only that, Satan (i.e. the birds) will come and snatch the Word from a hardened heart.
- a) As Luke clearly describes: *“Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.”* – Luke 8:12
- b) Careful, remember Parables are not detailed systematic theologies.
- i) Do not over read any parable.
- ii) This is not a detailed systematic study on how angelic beings work.
- 5) However, this is teaching:
- a) There is nothing more important than the Word of God.
- b) That there is a “Great War” going on right now.
- i) Between the Kingdom of God and this fallen earthly kingdom.
- ii) It has been going on since creation and will only end with Christ’s return.
- c) Yes, we right now have full redemption in Jesus Christ because we are on the other side of the Cross, Christ is ruling right now in heaven, and the church is Spirit-filled. Ps 110:1-2; Is 53:5-6; Matt 28:18-20
Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:32-33,38; 5:31
Rom 3:24-26; 5:1; 6:4-7; 8:1-2,30; Eph 1:7
Col 1:13-14; 2:12-13; Rev 1:5-6; 12:9
- 6) The Bible is very clear, supernatural, demonic, forces are very much at work right now, in this present age, even after the cross.¹ To give two references:
- a) 2Corinthians 4:3-4 – *“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*
- b) 1John 5:19-20 – *“We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”*

¹ 2Cor 4:3-4; 11:13-15; 12:7; Eph 2:2; 6:11-12; 1Thes 2:18; 3:5; 1Tim 4:1; 2Tim 2:25-26; James 4:7; 1Pet 5:8; 1John 5:19.

7) Remember, saving faith has three basic elements:

- a) **Intellectual Knowledge** (*notitia*): You factually know that Jesus Christ is the Savior of sinners through His gospel. John 17:3; Rom 10:14
1Tim 1:15; 2Tim 1:10
- b) **Intellectual Agreement** (*assensus*): You have assent (i.e. agreement, are persuaded, have conviction) that Christ and His gospel are true. John 3:33; 1Thes 2:13
2Tim 1:12; Heb 11:1
- c) **Willful Trust** (*fiducia*): You trust each day (i.e. rely, depend, lean, rest) in Christ and His work and promises toward you. Rom 4:21; Phil 3:8-9
Gal 2:20; Heb 12:2
- d) These three will always daily produce hope and loving good works, according to God's Law. Gal 5:6; Eph 2:8-10
1Cor 13:13; James 2:14-19
- e) All three are by grace alone. Eph 2:5,8-9; Phil 1:29

8) This is not about mere facts that a self-autonomous individual gets to personally judge and weigh.

- a) This is about life and death.
- b) Literally eternal life or eternal death.
- c) There is no neutrality.
- d) This is the most important thing.
- e) You are either with Christ or with the devil.
- f) If you don't know, or are just not concerned about it, then you are with the devil.
- g) This is war, this is *the* war.

Conclusion

1) No doubt you have many questions about this parable.

- a) I bet most of them focus on individuals or yourself.
- b) There is a place for those questions.
- c) However, remember the focus of this text: The importance of the Word of God.

2) God's Word does not come back void.

Isaiah 55:11-13 – *“So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. For you will go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up, and instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up, and it will be a memorial to the LORD, for an everlasting sign which will not be cut off.”*

3) Also remember, this is on the other side of the cross.

- a) This parable shows the necessity of the cross.
- b) And remember the Word that is proclaimed to us in the Lord's Supper!