

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Congregational

Lord's Day Worship for
April 19, 2026



trinityreformedct.org

"The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple." – Ps 119:130

“*” = Please stand if you are able.

Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

Call to Worship – Luke 17:5-10

Leader: The apostles said to the Lord,

People: Increase our faith!

Leader: And the Lord said, If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, be uprooted and be planted in the sea;

People: And it would obey you.

Leader: Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field,

People: Come immediately and sit down to eat?

Leader: But will he not say to him, Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink;

People: And afterward you may eat and drink?

Leader: He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded,

People: Does he?

Leader: So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, We are unworthy slaves;

People: We have done only that which we ought to have done.

Prayer of Invocation and Confession

Gospel Absolution Text – Matthew 11:25-30

*Hymn #94 – “How Firm a Foundation”

Scripture Reading – 2Peter 3:13-18

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 #119U** – “My Grief Regard”

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 Confession of Faith, 1.7,9.

Leader: 7 – *All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves,*

People: **Nor alike clear unto all:**

2Pet 3:16

Leader: *Yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded,*

People: **And opened in some place of Scripture or other,**

Leader: *That not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means,*

People: **May attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.**

Ps 119:105,130

Leader: 9 – *The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture*

People: **Is the Scripture itself:**

Leader: *And therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture*

People: **Which is not manifold, but one,**

Leader: *It must be searched and known by other places*

2Pet 1:20-21

People: **That speak more clearly.**

Acts 15:15-16

Ministry of the Word

Prayer of Illumination

***Sermon Text** – Matthew 13:31-32

***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 – “Discerning the Word”

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 #189** – “*Jesus Loves Me, This I Know*”

*Benediction

Everyone is welcome to Coffee Hour Fellowship downstairs after church today

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 6th**, (Note: THIS DATE IS A CHANGE) 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

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	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 13:31-32
"Discerning the Word"
A Sermon Series on Parables
April 19, 2026

Introduction

- 1) Part of the job of a pastor is to encourage, train and raise up new leaders within the church. Ex 18:21; Acts 14:23; 20:28
Eph 4:11-12; 2Tim 2:2; Titus 1:5
 - a) At Wednesday's Elder Board meeting I tried to remind the elders, and myself, on how to better teach the Word.
 - b) Such as: Stay focused on the text, don't go on detours, or ramble on about a particular problem that is only slightly mentioned in the text.
- 2) We are currently going through the Parables in the Gospels.
 - a) Today, is the Parable of the Mustard Seed as found in Matthew 13:31-32.
 - b) I want to use this parable to go on a detour and ramble on about a particular problem that is not directly taught in the text.
 - c) As always, I ask for your prayers.
- 3) Next week, I will return to the Parable of the Mustard Seed again and deal with it in context.
 - a) However, this is an excellent section of Scripture to illustrate how easy it is to misread Scripture.
 - b) So, today, a brief reading of this parable and a major tangent on how to read all of Scripture.

Background

- 1) The Lord Jesus has just taught two very famous parables:
 - a) The Parable of the Sower, Matt 13:1-9,18-23; Mark 4:13,3-9,13-20
Luke 8:5-8,11-15
the most important parable.
 - b) The Parable of the Tares Among the Wheat. Matt 13:24-30,36-43
- 2) Our Lord also explained why He teaches in parables, which is to Is 6:9-10; Matt 13:10-17
Mark 4:10-12
Luke 8:9-10
give the mysteries of the Kingdom to His disciples and to prove God's judgment is on the hard and worldly-hearted.
- 3) In-between the Parable of the Tares, and its explanation, are two short parables.
 - a) Today's parable: The Parable of the Mustard Seed. Matt 13:31-32
Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-21
 - b) In two week: The Leaven. Matt 13:33-35; Luke 13:20-21
- 4) All these parables are about the Kingdom of God.
 - a) After the Parable of the Tares, we read, "*He presented another parable to them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed . . .'*" – Matthew 13:31a
 - b) I love how Mark puts it: "*How shall we picture (or compare) the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? It is like a mustard seed*" – Mark 4:30b-31a

The Mustard Seed

- 1) What is this mustard seed?
 - a) Probably it is a black mustard seed (*brassica nigra*) which was common in ancient Israel.
 - b) This is different from the USA yellow mustard seeds (*sinapis alba* or *brassica alba*).¹
- 2) Black mustard seeds are extremely small.
 - a) About the size of a pinhead.
 - b) Yet in the climate of Palestine it could grow into a large shrub or tree-like plant, often 6-10 feet, and sometimes taller.
- 3) So the meaning of the Parable, on one level, is very straight-forward.
 - a) That the Kingdom of God begins small, seemingly insignificant, yet by God's power will grow into a great and expansive kingdom that encompasses and shelters many.
 - b) From a tiny seed to a plant where birds will nest in its branches.
 - c) Thus the Kingdom will become large, mature, and house many.
 - d) Giving shelter, stability, habitation for life, and can receive and sustain many.
- 4) This simple short parable, also, is a great illustration of how demanding it is to understand Scripture correctly.
- 5) With your patience I would like to take a tangent to ponder how this parable can be misread while hearing how to rightly handle the Word and hear about the Kingdom.

Handling Scripture Correctly

- 1) Learning how to handle the Scriptures takes training and skill.

Ezra 7:10; Heb 5:12-14; James 3:1
1Tim 4:13-16; 2Tim 2:15; 2:24-25

 - a) Including anyone trying to learn Scripture, or even to listen and understand it. (Which should be everyone!)

Deut 6:6-9; 11:18-21; 31:9-13; Neh 8:7-8;
Matt 4:4; 13:23; Luke 8:18; Acts 17:11
Rom 10:14-17; Col 3:16; Heb 5:14; James 1:21-22
 - b) Did we not just hear how many will not be able to truly listen in the most important parable in the Bible, the Parable of the Sower?

Mark 4:13,3-9,14-20
Matt 13:3-9,18-23; 13:13-15
Luke 8:5-8,11-15,18; Rom 10:17
 - c) Therefore, the Bible commands that those who lead the church must be skilled in handling the Word.

Ezra 7:10; Eph 4:11-12; Titus 1:9
1Tim 3:2; 4:13-16; 2Tim 2:15
 - d) And those who lead are held to a higher standard.

Luke 12:48; Acts 20:28; 1Cor 4:1-2
1Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; James 3:1
- 2) Remember the Third Commandment.

Ex 20:7; Deut 5:11

 - a) Exodus 20:7 – *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.”*
 - b) There is much more to this commandment than just saying God's name as a swear word, though that is a terrible sin too.

Lev 24:15-16; Matt 5:34-37
Eph 4:29; Col 3:8
James 5:12
 - c) It condemns proclaiming something as from God that He did not say, or denying that He has spoken on something He has said.

Deut 4:2; 18:20; Prov 30:5-6
Jer 14:14; 23:16,21-22; 23:36
Ezek 13:6-7; Matt 4:4; 15:9; Rev 22:18-19

¹ Black mustard seeds are small, pungent, dark-colored seeds from a Mediterranean plant, widely used as a pungent, nutty spice in South Asian cuisine and for making strong mustards. They offer a sharper, more intense flavor than brown or yellow seeds and are often fried in oil to release their flavor.

- 3) The study and interpretation of Scripture is not like: Ps 119:130; Prov 2:1-6; Luke 24:27,44-45
1Cor 2:12-14; 2Tim 2:15; 3:16-17
- a) A hard science, which is just about concrete facts.
- b) A modern art where it is about the emotional expression of the individual.
- 4) Though Scripture certainly does teach scientific facts and liberally uses art. Gen 1:1; Ps 19:1-4; 33:6-9; 78:2; Prov 1:6
Ezek 17:2; Matt 13:3; Rom 1:19-20
Col 1:16-17; 2Tim 3:16; Heb 11:3
- 5) Because Scripture is the inerrant, inspired, infallible, authoritative, written Word of God. Ps 19:7-9; Matt 5:17-18; John 10:35; 17:17
2Tim 3:16-17; 2Pet 1:20-21
- 6) The handling of Scripture is more like legal studies. Deut 17:8-11; Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:7-8
Matt 22:29; 2Tim 2:15; Titus 1:9
- a) This requires disciplined attention to language, context, text, history, logic, key terms, literary form, authorial intent, sound interpretive principles, self-critical awareness of bias, and proper covenantal and redemptive-historical distinctions.
- b) Though with the New Covenant it is more than just being a scribe/lawyer.
- c) It must be done with the light of the Gospel and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Matt 15:2ff; 22:29ff; Luke 24:27,44-45
John 5:39; 16:13; 1Cor 2:12-14
2Cor 3:14-16; 2Tim 3:14-17

How to Read Scripture In Light of the Parable of the Mustard Seed

- 1) First, you have to know your Scriptures.
- a) Pop Quiz: Is Parable of Mustard Seed in the other Gospels?
- i) Answer: Yes! Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-21
- ii) I confess, I have to always look these up.
- iii) Admiring what you do not know is wise. Ps 131:1; Prov 3:5; Eccl 8:17
- iv) Though mere biblical knowledge doesn't save, a true Christian yearns to understand God's Word, so he can know God better and follow His ways. John 5:39-40; 17:3
Rom 10:2-3; Phil 3:8-10
Col 1:9-10; 1Pet 2:2
- v) 1Peter 2:2 – *“Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,”*
- b) Or, how about this question: When you think “mustard seed” and the Bible, what do you first think of?
- i) Probably the line *“faith the size of a mustard seed”*?
- Thinking that it means that having minimal faith is acceptable.
 - I kind of slipped into that mistake last Sunday!
- ii) Nope, you realize that is another section of Scripture? Matt 17:20; Luke 17:6
- iii) And that is not about minimalistic faith, quite the opposite.
- iv) Today's discussion about the mustard seed is the Parable of the Mustard Seed, which is different from the section about having faith like a mustard seed.
- This parable is about the Kingdom of God, not individual concerns.
 - But why do we think first about individual concerns instead of His Kingdom?
 - Because we have been trained by the world instead of Scripture.

- c) Remember, the Parables are mostly about the Kingdom, the Lord's favorite subject during His earthly ministry. Matt 4:17; 13:11,24,31,33,44,45,47
Mark 1:14-15; 4:11,26,30
Luke :43; 8:10; 13:18,20; 19:11
- d) And the Parable of the Sower is the key to understand the other parables. Mark 4:13
- 2) Maturity is to hear all the Word and correctly.
- a) Weighing the more important parts.
- i) Where Scripture puts the focus.
 - ii) While not ignore any section.
 - iii) And putting it together as one whole way of thinking and acting.
 - iv) This is wear the creeds are really helpful.
- b) Example: The doctrine of hell.
- i) If you reject a literal hell you are rejecting the Word of God.
 - ii) If you over focus on hell you are doing it wrong.
 - iii) If you use the doctrine hell (e.g. a means of normal evangelism with no mention of the Gospel), you are doing it wrong.
- c) Example: Do we raise it to the challenge of what Matthew 13 is calling us to understand and focus on?
- i) To understand and focus on the Kingdom.
 - ii) When the Lord starts to repeat Himself we should listen.
 - iii) That the Kingdom is critical and takes knowledge and skill to understand.
- 3) This requires a Spirit-filled like scribe to understand how the Word of God works.
- 4) Or, do we act like the bad soils that have not heard when our Lord commands:
"He who has ears, let him hear." – Matthew 13:9,23

The Art of the Word

- 1) For example, an atheist might say: The black mustard isn't the smallest seed, so the Bible is wrong!
- a) Sigh.
- b) True, the orchid seeds are much smaller than black mustard seeds.
- i) There was an orchid in ancient Galilee whose seed was much smaller than a black mustard seed.
 - ii) Called the Galilee orchid; *Orchis galilaea*.
- c) However, this is a parable!
- i) Parables are brief fictional analogies drawn from ordinary life that usually convey a single central universal truth.
 - ii) It is like rejecting the (secular) parable of the Tortoise and the Hare because animals don't actually hold races in the wild.
- 2) Hyper-Literalism not how language works.
- a) When an orchid grows, it goes from a very tiny seed to a medium size plant.
 - b) When a black mustard seed grows, it goes from very small seed to a large plant.

- c) The Lord is not making a modern scientific taxonomy claim about every seed on earth.
 - i) He is speaking according to ordinary agrarian speech.
 - ii) That the smallest seed commonly sown in their fields are mustard seeds.
 - iii) This is the language of common human observation.
 - iv) Just as Scripture speaks of sunrise and sunset.
- 3) We as Protestants seek the literal, or plain, meaning of Scripture.
 - a) To hear the original intention of the author.
 - b) However, to understand the plain meaning of Scripture requires the recognition that the Bible frequently uses literary forms and figures of speech.
 - c) Especially the parables!
 - d) Since the 19th century, the church has been plagued with two errors on the extremes of how to read Scripture.
- 4) One error is a squishy literary, or artistic, approach to Scripture.
 - a) Like modern art which is about the individual feelings of the artist and viewer, with no sense of universal truth, so everything can be twisted to conform to the world.
 - b) Frequently the heresy of Theological Liberalism tries to make everything into parables to avoid a simple literal reading.
 - c) For example, hell becomes a mere parable, not a literal place of eternal punishment.
 - d) Why? Because modern man doesn't like the fact that God is holy and just, and that humanity is fallen.
 - e) We just read in the explanation of the Parable of the Tares, that hell literally exists. You can't turn the explanation into a parable too! Matt 13:30,41-42
- 5) On the other extreme is the hyper-literalism.
- 6) One form of hyper-literalism is from atheists and secularists.
 - a) As if thinking the existence of orchid seeds proves the faith is false.
 - b) I once had an atheist tell me that since the Bible teaches Lev 11:13,19
the bat is a bird that therefore God doesn't exist. Deut 14:11-12,18
As if reading modern taxonomy classifications into ancient ones proves anything.
 - c) My favorite definition of atheism is: The dogmatic belief that God doesn't exist coupled with a passionate hatred of Him.
 - d) By the way, atheists don't get to define atheism, the Word of God does.
 - i) *"The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."* – Psalm 14:1a; 53:1a
 - ii) We Christians are to always be charitable, Matt 7:12; John 13:34-35; Rom 12:10
meek, not arrogant or self-seeking. 1Cor 13:4-5; Phil 2:3-4; 1Pet 4:8
 - iii) However, we are to be Ps 119:97; John 8:31-32; 14:6; 17:17
lovers of *THE* truth. 2Thes 2:10; 1John 2:21; 3John 1:3-4
 - iv) And remember the Parable of the Sower, lest the Word of God dies in us from concerns about the world.
 - v) It is foolish to use the definition of fools who are trying to justify their foolishness.
 - vi) Proverbs 26:4-5 – *"Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes."*

- 7) Another form of hyper-literalism is Christian Fundamentalism.
- a) That there can be no subtleties of language, just wooden, simplistic, reading.
 - b) If I say to you, “the Pirates murdered the Indians last night” what does that mean?
 - i) Anyone take that literally?
 - ii) Of course not, unless you are not following the plain meaning, which requires understanding of context, culture, setting etc.
 - c) This is one of the problems with Premillennial Dispensationalism.
 - i) Who read the OT in such a hyper-literal way and miss the clear teaching of the New Testament.
 - Thus, they believe the land promises in the OT apply to the secular state of Israel.
 - Or that the church should encourage modern Israel to rebuild the Temple.
 - ii) This is contrary to Scripture.
 - Which clearly teaches all the things of the Old Testament are shadows and figures of the reality of Christ and His Kingdom. Luke 24:27,44; John 5:39
Rom 5:14; Col 2:16-17
Heb 1:1-2;8:5; 10:1
 - Because His Kingdom is like a mustard seed that will grow throughout the whole earth and shelter the saints of the New Covenant. Ezek 17:22-24; Dan 2:34-35,44
Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32
Luke 13:18-19; Rev 7:9-1

Conclusion

- 1) That is why the parables are so important as they help us to focus on, and understand, the Kingdom of God better. Ps 78:2; Matt 13:10-11,34-35
Luke 8:10; 13:18-21; Col 1:13
- 2) For example, is the Kingdom:
 - Already or not yet? Matt 12:28; Luke 17:20-24; Rev 11:15
 - Is it not of this world or in this world? Matt 28:18; Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36
 - Does it start in the Garden? At Sinai? At Christmas? Gen 1:26-28; Ex 19:5-6; Dan 2:44
 - At Easter? At Pentecost? With Christ’s return at the end of the age? Matt 28:18; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 2:11
Acts 1:3; 2:1-4; 2Tim 4:1
 - Is it powerful or meekness? Ps 110:1-2; Matt 5:5; 1Cor 4:20
 - Is it about the Law, or the Gospel, or life in the Spirit? Jer 31:33; Rom 8:2-4; Gal 5:16-18
 - Is it already victorious or currently contested? Ps 110:1; Col 2:15; Rev 12:1
 - Do only a few find it or are there many rooms within it? Matt 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24; John 14:2
- 3) Answer: Yes!
- 4) So in one sense, the Kingdom is very complex and deep.
- 5) And another way it is simplicity itself.
 - a) It is like a mustard seed.
 - b) That will grow greatly and give life and protection to all those who dwell in it.
- 6) Thus, Luke 22:14-18 – *“When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. And He said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, ‘Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.”*