

# Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Congregational

Lord's Day Worship for  
April 26, 2026



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

“And He said, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,’” – Matthew 13:37

“\*” = *Please stand if you are able.*

## Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

### Call to Worship – Psalm 104:5-12

*Leader: He established the earth upon its foundations,*

**People: So that it will not totter forever and ever.**

*Leader: You covered it with the deep as with a garment;*

**People: The waters were standing above the mountains.**

*Leader: At Your rebuke they fled,*

**People: At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away.**

*Leader: The mountains rose; the valleys sank down*

**People: To the place which You established for them.**

*Leader: You set a boundary that they may not pass over,*

**People: So that they will not return to cover the earth.**

*Leader: He sends forth springs in the valleys;*

**People: They flow between the mountains;**

*Leader: They give drink to every beast of the field;*

**People: The wild donkeys quench their thirst.**

*Leader: Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell;*

**People: They lift up their voices among the branches.**

## Prayer of Invocation and Confession

### Gospel Absolution Text – Revelation 22:1-2

\***Hymn #441** – “*Jesus Shall Reign*”

### Scripture Reading – Ezekiel 17:22-24

**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 #104B** – “*By Limits You Set*”

## **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** – Heidelberg Catechism, Q#123.

**Leader:** Question: *What does the second petition (of the Lord's Prayer which is "Your Kingdom come") mean?*

**People:** **Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way**

**Leader:** *That more and more we submit to you.*

Ps 119:5,105; 143:10; Matt 6:33

**People:** **Preserve your church and make it grow.**

Ps 122:6-9; Matt 16:18; Acts 2:42-47

**Leader:** *Destroy the devil's work; destroy every force which revolts against you*

**People:** **And every conspiracy against your holy Word.**

Rom 16:20; 1John 3:8

**Leader:** *Do this until your kingdom fully comes,*

**People:** **When you will be all in all.**

Rom 8:22-23; 1Cor 15:28; Rev 22:17,20

## **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** – "Parable of the Mustard Seed"

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 #715** – "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come"

**\*Benediction**

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

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## Announcements

- TRC would like to thank all those who helped out with the Pot-Luck Game Night.
- TRC would like to thank all those who helped out with the Gale Morse funeral.

## Upcoming Events

- The next in-person **Elder-Deacon meeting** is on Saturday, **May 16<sup>th</sup>**, from 8:00-10:00ish AM, at the Aldrich's.
- **June 6<sup>th</sup>**, 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 27<sup>th</sup>)
- **July 18<sup>th</sup>**, 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 10<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday, there will our annual **Oktoberfest** at the Aldrich's. If possible, please bring a food item. (Rain Date: October 17<sup>th</sup>)
- *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 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>: Thessalonians. On other: Free discussion.
  - Gen-Alpha Club** 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays, at Pastor Doug's house.
  - Friday Young Adult Discussion Group** (6:30 PM) meets on 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> 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</i>	youtube.com/simplyreformed
<i>Youtube Channels:</i>	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**

Matthew 13:31-32  
"Parable of the Mustard Seed"  
A Sermon Series on Parables  
April 26, 2026

## **Introduction**

- 1) The Lord throughout Scripture promises good to His people.
  - a) The very first words of God recorded in Scripture are the creation of that thing that is most like God, and the most essential thing for life.  
*Genesis 1:3 – "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."*
  - b) The first reference to the Gospel is in Genesis 3:15, Rom 16:20  
where Christ's defeat of Satan is preordained.
  - c) There is the great covenant with Abraham applying to all of God's people throughout this age.  
*Genesis 17:17 – "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you."*
  - d) Of course, Christ's great promise right before His ascension.  
*Matthew 28:20b – "and lo (mark this well), I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
  - e) And the last words of Christ in Scripture are the great promise given by Christ.  
*Revelation 22:20 – "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."*
- 2) We are going through the Parables of the Lord Jesus in the synoptic Gospels.
- 3) Today is the Parable of the Mustard Seed. Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19
  - a) The Parable of the Mustard Seed is rather straightforward.
  - b) That the Kingdom of God starts off seemingly very small and weak.
  - c) But it will grow and shelter many.
- 4) Let us go through this parable closely and rejoice in its promises.

## **"And He Said"**

- 1) It is easy to quickly skim over very critical parts of Scripture because we are so familiar with them.
  - a) Like the opening of the Epistles.
  - b) Such as: "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*"
  - c) Which is found in Romans 1:7; 1Corinthians 1:3; 2Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Philemon 3.  
(And very similar wording in Colossians 1:2; 1Thessalonians 1:1; 2Thessalonians 1:2; Revelation 1:4)
  - d) That sentence is of no small thing.

- 2) It might be tempting to simply not notice where our sermon text starts; *“He presented . . .”*  
- Matthew 13:31a.
  - a) Or as Mark records it, *“And He said,”* – Mark 4:30a
  - b) The “He” is of course the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3) Even we Christians can forget how extraordinary this is.
  - a) This is God incarnate speaking.
  - b) He who is the Second Person of the Trinity – fully God and fully man yet without sin.
  - c) The very Son of God; King of kings and Lord of lords.
- 4) Thus when He speaks it’s with full authority.
 

	Mal 3:6; Matt 7:28-29; John 1:1,14; 5:22,27; 10:30
	Rom 9:14-16; 2Tim 2:13; Titus 1:2; Heb 1:1-3

  - a) When He judges, His justice and wrath are perfect.
  - b) When He proclaims mercy, kindness and grace, He can be fully trusted.
  - c) For He cannot deny Himself, because He is God.
  - d) He is the very Word of God incarnate.
- 5) Think of the times throughout creation when He has spoken to us.
 

a) Creation is spoken into existence, and the very word of God is Christ, and all of creation is good, with man being very good.	Gen 1:3,10,12,18,21,25,31 John 1:1-3,14; 1Cor 8:6 Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:2-3; 11:3
b) When God proclaims His Law at Sinai.	Ex 19:3-6,9; 20:1-22; Deut 4:12-13; 5:4-5,22 Neh 9:13-14; Heb 12:18-21
c) The pinnacle and purpose of creation, the good news, when the Incarnate Word becomes human to die on a cross for the sins of the world.	John 1:1,14; 3:16; Rom 5:8 1Cor 15:3-4; Gal 4:4-5 Heb 1:1-2; 2:14-17
d) By His Word He now gives His saints new life in the Spirit.	John 3:5-8; 5:24; 6:63 Rom 10:17; James 1:18; 1Pet 1:23
e) And finally, at the end of the age, His Word will bring about the consummation of the ages, when all His promises are fulfilled and His people will dwell with Him perfectly forever.	Is 55:11; Matt 24:35; John 14:2-3 1Thes 4:16-17; Heb 9:26; 12:26-28 2Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:1-4; 22:3-5
- 6) But let us go back and reflect on the Word Incarnate’s public teaching about His Kingdom being like a mustard seed.

## **A Parable of the Kingdom**

- 1) It is interesting how the different Gospels present this parable.
  - a) Matthew simply records *“He (Jesus) presented another parable to them, saying . . .”*  
– Matthew 13:31a
    - i) Remember who the *“them”* is.
    - ii) As Matthew will later tell us it is *“the crowd”*.
    - iii) Matthew 13:34 – *“All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable.”*

- iv) Our Lord taught in parables to explain the mysteries of the Kingdom to His disciples and to prove God's judgment was on the hard and worldly-hearted. Is 6:9-10  
Matt 13:10-17  
Mark 4:10-12  
Luke 8:9-10
- v) Remember, this story must end in a cross.
- b) Mark and Luke show the Lord musing about the Kingdom with a deliberative rhetorical question.
- i) Mark 4:30b – *“How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it?”*
- ii) Luke 13:18b – *“What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?”*
- c) This is rhetorically powerful.
- i) Rhetoric is the art of using language effectively to communicate and persuade.
- It draws attention to the importance of what follows.
  - It engages the hearer into active consideration.
  - It highlights the difficulty or profundity of describing the Kingdom.
- ii) It is theologically charitable and powerful.
- 2) 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 4:3; 8:10; 13:18,20; 19:11
- 3) Parables are brief fictional analogies drawn from ordinary life that usually convey a single central universal truth.
- 4) The Kingdom, simply put, is where the King directly reigns. Ps 103:19; Dan 7:13-14; Obad 21  
Matt 6:10; 12:28; Luke 17:20-21; Rev 11:15
- a) It is that simple, where Jesus is directly reigning, there is the Kingdom.
- b) But it is also vast, complex, and impossible to understand unless by the grace of God.
- c) That is why there are so many parables.

## **A Sowed Mustard Seed**

- 1) The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. Matt 13:31; Mark 4:31; Luke 13:19
- 2) This is probably the black mustard seed (*brassica nigra*) which was common in ancient Israel.
- a) Black mustard seeds are extremely small.
- b) About the size of a pinhead.
- c) 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) A man sows this seed.
- a) We know from other parables that the Sower is first and foremost Jesus Christ. Matt 13:37
- b) And the seed is the Word of God. Mark 4:14
- 4) Note the language of where the mustard seed is sown.
- a) Matthew 13:31b - *“sowed in his field”*.
- b) Luke 13:19b - *“took and threw into his own garden”*.

- c) As we read in the Parable of the Sower the word of God is sown on all different types of soils. Matt 13:3-9,18-23  
Mark 4:3-9,14-20; Luke 8:5-8,11-15
- i) The bad soils of hardened road, rocky, and thorny.
  - ii) And the good soil of the “good soil.”
  - iii) The soils are the human heart which either rejects the word (either immediately or over time) or accepts it and produces fruit (i.e. good works).
- d) The subtle change in the Parable of the Mustard Seed is beautiful.
- e) The seed is sown in a field (*agros*).
- i) This can imply the world, since the saints are taken out of the world.
  - ii) But it also implies good soil because one plants in a field.
  - iii) As Paul writes, “*For we (apostles) are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field (geōrgion), God’s building.*” – 1Corinthians 3:9
- f) It is also a garden (*kēpos*).
- i) Where in pre-modern times the wilderness is terrifying. Deut 8:15; 32:10; Job 1:7; 30:3-8  
Is 13:21-22; 34:13-15; Matt 4:1; 12:43
  - ii) Gardens, in the Bible, are usually shown as good, because they are places of order, where life, fruitfulness, and beauty are carefully brought forth. Gen 2:8-10,15; 13:10  
Num 24:6; Eccl 2:4-5  
Is 1:29; 58:11; 65:3  
John 18:1,26; 19:41
  - iii) Gardens are frequently used as allusions to God’s ordered presence and blessing, where He dwells with His people and brings about life, fruitfulness, and restoration. Gen 2:8-10,15; 3:8; Num 24:6  
SoS 4:12-16; 5:1; 6:2,11; Is 51:3  
Ezek 28:13; 31:8-9; 36:33-36  
John 19:41; Rev 2:7; 22:1-2
- g) Putting both images together is beautiful.
- i) The field (in Matthew) is the world at large; Christ’s Kingdom is being expanded throughout the whole world. Because the saints will come from all the nations.
  - ii) The garden (in Luke) shows God’s election of the saints, His people whom He has chosen, by His grace and mercy.
- 5) Though the Kingdom starts off small it becomes larger than all the other plants.
- a) The Kingdom here refers to the New Covenant, which starts off very small two thousand years ago.
  - b) It begins with the Word becoming incarnate and dying by Himself on a cross.
  - c) But He rises from the dead and gives His Spirit to the Apostles and sends them out into the world.
    - i) Not with things of worldly power.
    - ii) But simply with the Spirit, to boldly proclaim the Gospel, through faith, hope and love.
  - d) It has been 2,000 years since those events.
    - i) And right now over half the world’s population on some level claims Christ as being from God.

- ii) Christianity is the world's largest religion.
  - About 30.5% of the world claims to be Christian.
  - About 2.4 billion, out of roughly 8 billion people.
- iii) It is true, not all of those who claim Christ, or even claim to be Christian, are truly saints.
- iv) And truth is not determined by numbers. (There will probably be a time before the end when saints are very few in number.)
- e) Yet has not the prophecy of the Parable of the Mustard Seed come true?!
- f) That we are 2,000 years from Christ's 1<sup>st</sup> Advent, and over 5,500+ miles away from Jerusalem witness to this!

## Nesting Imagery

- 1) The imagery our Lord uses in this Parable of His Kingdom is not just growth.
  - a) It is protection, sheltering, a home.
  - b) Matthew 13:32 – It *“becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”*
  - c) Mark 4:32 – It *“forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.”*
  - d) Luke 13:19 – *“the birds of the air nested in its branches.”*
- 2) This imagery is found throughout Scripture.
- 3) For example, look at Psalm 104.
  - a) Which is a great creation psalm about God's wisdom, power, ordering, and sustaining all things in heaven and earth.
  - b) We read in verses 10-12 - *“He sends forth springs in the valleys; They flow between the mountains; They give drink to every beast of the field; The wild donkeys quench their thirst. Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; They lift up their voices among the branches.”*
  - c) Why did God create everything?
 

Gen 1:26-31; 2:15; Is 43:6-7; John 1:12-13; Rom 11:36  
Col 1:16-20; Eph 1:9-12; Rev 4:11; 5:9-13; 21:1-5

    - i) For His glory.
    - ii) That His Son might be born and redeem His people and the cosmos.
    - iii) And that His children may enjoy its beauty and use it as a means to love Him and our neighbor, while we are pilgrims in this fallen world.
- 4) We read in Daniel 4:12, and Ezekiel 31:6, that vast worldly empires, like the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian empires, will be like a great tree where many nations (the birds) will dwell, making the tree grand and powerful, in the worldly sense.
  - a) God does ordain worldly nations, and rulers, as a blessing, giving earthly protection and order, as per His will.
  - b) Yes, the world will war on the church.
    - i) Just as the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Romans, etc., have.
    - ii) Yet they are just plunder for Christ so
 

Ps 2:7-9; 24:1; 110:1-3  
Matt 28:18-20; Rom 13:8-10  
1Tim 4:4-5; Heb 13:16; 1Pet 4:10-11

- The church will use the material things of this world.
- To love God and our neighbor.
- To save souls.

iii) Where are these empires now?

5) Probably the best text about this is Ezekiel 17:11-24, especially verse 23.

a) Verses 11-18 are a parable of judgment against the Old Covenant Church, Judah.

- i) She has trusted in herself and the world, instead of God.
- ii) Judah is like a vine planted by a great eagle (Babylon).
- iii) And then unfaithfully turned to another eagle (Egypt).
- iv) Breaking covenant with Babylon and even worse, not trusting in God.
- v) Thus, she has brought ruin upon herself.

b) Verses 19-21 are a declaration of God's judgment against the last king of Judah (Zedekiah) and God's people.

c) But there is a hope; a new covenant is coming, that will become a great tree.

d) Ezekiel 17:23-24 – *“On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches. All the trees of the field will know that I am the LORD; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will perform it.”*

- i) God alone, by His power, will restore the fallen Davidic line.
- ii) God will plant a “tender shoot” that will grow into a great Kingdom.
- iii) In His Kingdom people of all the different nations will find shelter.
- iv) God will humble the proud and powerful, and exalt the lowly.
- v) Proving that God alone is sovereign over all kings and kingdoms.

6) Is this not true?

- a) Has it not been fulfilled and is being fulfilled?
- b) Then why are you afraid, o ye of little faith?
- c) Be thankful and rejoice.

7) Matthew 6:30-34 – *“But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*

8) Let us go to His table and taste His kindness and dwell in the shadow of His wings.