

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Conservative, Congregational

Lord's Day Worship for
May 24, 2026

*"I am (Jesus Christ) the good shepherd; the good shepherd
lays down His life for the sheep." – John 10:11*



trinityreformedct.org

“*” = Please stand if you are able.

Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

Call to Worship – Ezekiel 34:11-15

*Leader: For thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep
and seek them out.*

People: As a shepherd cares for his herd

Leader: In the day when he is among his scattered sheep,

People: So I will care for My sheep

Leader: And will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered

People: On a cloudy and gloomy day.

Leader: I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries

People: And bring them to their own land;

Leader: And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams,

People: And in all the inhabited places of the land.

Leader: I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground

People: Will be on the mountain heights of Israel.

Leader: There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture

People: On the mountains of Israel.

Leader: I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,

People: Declares the Lord GOD.

Prayer of Invocation and Confession

Gospel Absolution Text – Isaiah 40:10-11

***Hymn #599** – *“Savior, like Shepherd Lead Us”*

Scripture Reading – Matthew 18:1-11

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 #23C** – *“The Lord’s My Shepherd”*

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, 17,1-2.

Leader: *They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved,* Phil 1:6
effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, 2Pet 1:10

People: **Can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace,** 1John 3:9
1Pet 1:5,9

Leader: *But shall certainly persevere therein to the end,*

People: **And be eternally saved.**

Leader: *This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election,* 2Tim 2:18-19
Jer 31:3

People: **Flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father;** Heb 10:10,14; 13:20-21
Heb 9:12-15; Rom 8:33-39

Leader: *Upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, And of the seed of God within them,* John 17:11,24; Luke 22:32
Heb 7:25; John 14:16-17
1John 2:27; 3:9

People: **And the nature of the covenant of grace:** Jer 32:40

Leader: *From all which ariseth* John 10:28

People: **Also the certainty and infallibility thereof.** 2Thes 3:3; 1John 2:19

Ministry of the Word

Prayer of Illumination

***Sermon Text** – Matthew 18:12-14; (Luke 15:1-7)

***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 Lost Sheep”

A Sermon Series on Parables

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

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 #600** – “*He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought!*”

***Benediction**

Everyone is welcome to Coffee Hour Fellowship downstairs after church today

Upcoming Events

- Wednesday Night Bible Study for June 3rd is canceled.
- **June 6th**, 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

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| <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. (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@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 18:12-14 (Luke 15:1-7)
"The Parable of the Lost Sheep"
A Sermon Series on Parables
May 24, 2026

Introduction

- 1) The written Word of God, i.e. Holy Scripture, is amazing. Josh 1:8; Ps 1:1-3; 19:7-11; 119:18,97-105; Matt 22:31
Rom 9:25; 1Cor 4:6; 14:37; Heb 4:12; 2Tim 3:15-17
- 2) We are going through the major sections of the parables in the Gospels.
 - a) We just finished up, arguably, the most important chapter about parables in the Gospels: Matthew 13. Mark 4:13
 - b) Which is about the Lord Jesus' most commented on subject during His earthly ministry: The Kingdom of God.
 - c) I was struck last week when finishing up Matthew 13 on how the several parables in Matthew are clearly thematically organized.
 - d) It is very tempting to read Scripture as isolated units, especially the parables.
- 3) Remember Pastor Doug's favorite rules for reading the Scripture:
 - a) **Rule #1 = Context, context, context.**
 - i) Read the section of Scripture within the context of what goes before and after it.
 - ii) This requires knowing something about history and grammar.
 - iii) We are trying to hear the author's original intent before making application.
 - b) **Rule #2 = Unpack the pronouns.**
 - i) Who are the I, you, he/she/it, we, you'll, them/they, etc. talking about.
 - ii) Above all be wary of inserting yourself into a text, making the pronoun you the hearer, when it is actually an Apostle, let alone God Himself.

Misreading the Parable of the Lost Sheep

- 1) When you hear today's sermon text about the Parable of the Lost Sheep, what do you think is its main teaching? Its purpose? What is its primary practical teaching?
 - a) Let me read it again:
 - b) Matthew 13:12b-13 – *"If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray."*
- 2) So, what is this parable about?
 - a) Most moderns would answer: It is about a person that is willing to do anything to go and bring an individual back into the fold.
 - b) If there is someone in your family who falls away, it is your job to go and radically love that person back home through kindness.
 - c) Or in the church, if a member stops going to church for years, it is the main job of the elders to go and shower that person with love so that they will come back to church.

d) Because: “The Gospel is all about radical acceptance”, “People need belonging before belief”, “Jesus never turned anyone away”, “Love first; theology later”, “Relationship over religion”, “The church should feel like a safe space”, “The church is a hospital for the spiritually wounded”, “Just keep loving them no matter what”, “You may be the only Bible someone ever reads”, “Love louder”, “Lead with love”, “People don’t care what you know until they know that you care”, “Just love people where they’re at”, “Love wins”, “Our job is simply to love, not judge”.

3) No.

a) This is not what this parable is about.

b) Like all lies, there is some truth to what this false reading is proclaiming, but it is taking the text completely out of context.

4) Notice all the false teaching and assumptions that are being imported into this text.

a) It assumes the lost sheep in the parable are still in the flock no matter what they have done.

i) As if getting lost is the same thing as fleeing the shepherd.

ii) Let alone joining up with the wolves.

b) It assumes love only means kindness and agreement, devoid of justice and discernment. Love without justice and discernment is not love.

c) It assumes no moral responsibility on the lost, only on those who seek.

d) It puts more emphasis on the world than the church.

e) Above all, it falsely assumes the “man” is the reader of this text, the individual.

5) Let’s look at the context of Matthew 18:12-14.

Overview of Matthew 18

1) **Matthew 18:1-6** = The disciples ask Jesus, “*Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*”
– Matthew 18:1b

a) As always, it is about the King and His Kingdom.

b) The answer is to be “child-like” which is the opposite of being “childish.”

Matt 18:3-4; 20:25-28; Mark 10:14-15
Luke 18:15-17; Phil 2:3-8; 1Pet 5:5-6

c) A child-like faith is humble, dependent on God that renounces pride, self-sufficiency, self-exaltation, and worldly status in order to submit to, and follow Christ.

Ps 131:1-2; Prov 3:5-7; 22:4
John 3:30; 15:4-5; Acts 20:19
Rom 12:3,16; 1Cor 1:26-31; 3:18-20
Col 3:12; James 4:6-10; 1Pet 5:5-6

i) This is like the virtue of forgiveness.

ii) We like it in the theoretical until we have to practice it.

d) The apostles, the church, and actually everyone, should receive such a humble Christian, because they are actually receiving the King.

e) However, it would be better for someone to be dead than to cause one of these humble servants of the King to stumble.

2) **Matthew 18:7-11** = Stumbling blocks will come to the saints.

a) The fallen world under Satan is warring on Christ and His followers.

Gen 3:15; Is 53:3; John 15:18-21; 16:33
Eph 2:1-3; 6:11-12; 1John 5:19; Rev 12:17

i) So there should be no surprise that stumbling blocks will come.

ii) But woe to those who create stumbling blocks to Christ’s servants.

- b) Believers, however, must deal decisively with sin because hell is infinitely more terrible than any earthly loss or sacrifice required for holiness.
 - c) One must never despise a humble servant of Christ, because they have angels in heaven who intercede for them before God.
 - d) Because the purpose of the King is to save and protect His people.
- 3) **Matthew 18:12-14** = Today's sermon text.
- a) About what the King is like, and does, when the stumbling blocks come to His servants.
 - b) More about this in a bit.
- 4) **Matthew 18:15-20** = Explains how to deal with a brother who sins, especially against you.
- a) First go to him in private.
 - i) If that doesn't work then go to him with two or more witnesses with you.
 - ii) If that doesn't work, take it to the church.
 - b) If he refuses to listen to the church then he is removed from fellowship and shunned.
 - c) Because the church has the supreme power, to bind people to heaven by the administration of the Gospel, or to release them for destruction through church discipline.
 - d) Note, this unrepentant sinner is hardly the lost sheep our Lord is speaking about in Matthew 18:12-14.
 - e) When the church gathers, no matter how small the local assembly might be, there is the King!
- 5) **Matthew 18:21-35** = Forgiveness
- a) A question arises about how much one should forgive.
 - b) The quick answer is: Always.
 - c) But since our Lord explained this in a parable, we will look at it next week.
- 6) With this context now in mind, let us go back and ponder today's sermon text.

Matthew 18:12-14 – We Are Sheep

- 1) After teaching that His servants must be humble like a child, that they will face great stumbling blocks in this world, that personal sin must be radically cut off, and woe to those who despise His humble servants, our Lord asks a question:
 - a) "*What do you think?*" – Matthew 18:12a
 - b) This simple appeal to common understanding highlights what is coming next.
 - c) It is common when introducing a parable.
 - d) Especially after such intense teaching.
- 2) This parable is about Christ's mercy to His subjects, the elect.
 - a) It is first and foremost about Him, the King, and then the subjects of His Kingdom.
 - b) As is all of Scripture and all of creation.

- 3) His Kingdom is large, perfect, and full of many blessings.
- a) Like we heard in several parables back in Matthew 13!
 - b) The sheep, as we read in Luke 15:4, are in open pasture and thus in a good place.
 - c) But one sheep goes “astray” and gets lost.
- 4) These are sheep, not goats.
- a) The sheep have not abandoned the flock. They are not trying to be wolves.
 - b) Sheep are generally submissive and flock-oriented animals.
 - i) They are dependent, vulnerable, helpless, have a poor sense of direction, and are prone to wander.
 - ii) They need a shepherd.
- 5) When it comes to the things of the Kingdom, we poor pilgrims in this present evil age, we are but sheep. Ps 23:1-4; Is 53:6; Ezek 34:11-16
Matt 9:36; John 10:11-16,27-28; 1Pet 2:25
- a) This is not to justify any sin.
 - b) Nor am I saying you cannot be “strong”.
 - i) Christian men are called to act like men. 1Cor 16:13-14; Eph 5:25-28; 6:10-18
 - ii) Christians can be commandos, SWAT team members, if so called.
 - c) We will be weak in this age, as getting older teaches us.
 - d) And if we think fighting like the world is how we follow Christ, we will surely go astray.
 - e) Do you really think you can fight against Satan, his demons, the world, the effects of sin on your mind, soul and body by your own strength?
- 6) As Scripture teaches: *“All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way”* – Isaiah 53:6. Ps 119:176
James 5:19-20
- a) By the way, going after your own way, being “true to yourself”, “believing in yourself”, means you are rejecting the King, rejecting the Shepherd, and this will only lead to eternal destruction. Is 53:6; Jer 6:16; 50:6
Matt 7:13-14,21-23
John 10:11-14,27-28; 14:6
Rom 6:23; 2Thes 1:8-9
 - b) But there is hope, keep on reading Isaiah 53:6.
 - c) Isaiah 53:6 – *“All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (Christ).”*
 - d) Jesus is the “man” in this parable, He is the Good Shepherd. Ezek 34:11-16; Ps 23
Is 40:11; John 10:11
 - i) John 10:11,14b-15 – *“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep . . . and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”*
 - ii) John 10:27-28 – *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”*

Matthew 18:12-14 – The Lord Rejoices

- 1) The salvation the Lord Jesus gives is not just a moment of conversion.
 - a) But He guides and protects His elect throughout our lives.
 - b) Though we frequently get stuck on stupid, the Lord is merciful.

- c) Just look at the beginning of Matthew 18, and the parallel texts. Matt 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37
Luke 9:46-48
- i) The disciples are actually arguing about which one among themselves is the greatest in the Kingdom.
 - ii) The Lord overhears them and they go silent because they got caught.
- d) If you are shocked at how “unspiritual” they are, have you not noticed the plank in your own eye. Matt 7:1-5; Luke 6:37-42; Rom 2:1-3
Gal 6:1-3; James 3:2; 1John 1:8-10
- i) Have you not done worse?
 - ii) Have you kept the Law, in deed, word and thought?
- e) We, Christians, are all like sheep, prone to wander.
- 2) Yet all of Matthew 18 is the Lord literally illustrating how He seeks after His sheep by gently teaching them.
- 3) The Lord seeks after us (Christians) when we go astray through His Word, His sacraments, as administered by His church.
- a) Yes, the church should contact those who stop coming to services.
 - b) However, it is to call them back, to call for their repentance.
 - c) Like the Lord Jesus did to Peter, after Peter denied Him. Jesus asked Peter three times, “*Do you love Me?*” and “*Tend My sheep.*” John 21:15-17
 - d) If they refuse to listen to the church then they are to be treated as a heathen or a tax collector. Matt 18:17
 - e) There is a big difference between faithful Peter who very much went astray and Judas who refused to repent and thus is called “*the son of perdition*”, destined for eternal destruction. John 17:12
- 4) Please note, the Lord’s reaction when He finds one of us while we are straying: Joy!
- a) We frequently speak about that in heaven we will praise God for all eternity, which is very much true! Ps 145:1-2; Is 6:1-3; Luke 19:37-40
Jude 24; Rev 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:9-12
 - b) However, have you ever thought that when He finds a lost saint heaven itself rejoices.
 - c) Matthew 18:13 – “*If it turns out that He (Christ) finds it (the straying sheep), truly I say to you, He rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.*”
- 5) You realize this is taught elsewhere in Scripture. Deut 30:9; Jer 32:41; John 17:13
- a) Look at the parallel text in Luke 15:5-7.
 - i) “*When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*”
 - ii) The “sinner” here refers to the elect.
 - iii) It can refer to those who are not yet converted.
 - And we cannot see who will believe or not.
 - Thus we preach the Gospel to everyone.
 - iv) However, it also includes those who believe and have gone astray.

- b) Luke 15:10 – *“In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*
- c) Isaiah 62:5 – *“For as a young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you.”*
- d) Hebrews 12:2 – *“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

Conclusion

- 1) You don't think this applies to the elect?
 - a) What is the last verse of our sermon text?
 - b) Matthew 18:14 – *“So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.”*
- 2) We get so fixed on the mysteries of predestination from a man-centric view we forget that the doctrine is usually presented as a positive thing in Scripture to encourage us.
 - a) Go read Romans 8 or Ephesians 1.
 - b) What a blessing it is that our Lord, who now reigns in heaven, gives aid, comfort and succor to His weak, feeble children.
 - c) And rejoices over us when He finds us when we have gone astray and gives us grace.
- 3) Should the church, as an administrator of God's grace, seek after the sheep that go astray? Yes.
 - a) Should we preach the Gospel to all? Yes.
 - b) As the Epistle of James ends: *“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner (i.e. a straying Christian) from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”*
– James 5:19-20
 - c) And the clear teaching about forgiveness in the rest of today's sermon text.
 - d) Should we misread Scripture to have a man-centric philosophy devoid of God's holiness, the power and dignity of His church, and that sees everyone as a victim? No.
- 4) Matthew 18:12-14 is not a Law/doing text. It is a Gospel text.
 - a) When we understand the mercies of Christ, how can we not love God, His church, our neighbors and even our enemies, more?
 - b) The power of God, however, is not in our doing, but in His finished work of the cross.
 - c) This power, how He searches after us who wander, and finds us, is proclaimed in His Supper.
 - d) For it is a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace.
 - e) To end with a great Communion text: *“The LORD your God is in your midst; He is a warrior who can deliver. He takes great delight in you; He renews you by his love; He shouts for joy over you.”* – Zephaniah 3:17 (NET)