

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Conservative, Congregational

Lord's Day Worship for
July 26, 2026

"I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord God. 'I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.'" – Ezekiel 34:15-16



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“*” = Please stand if you are able.

Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

Call to Worship – Ephesians 2:1-5

Leader: And you were dead

People: In your trespasses and sins,

Leader: In which you formerly walked according

People: To the course of this world,

Leader: According to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working

People: In the sons of disobedience.

Leader: Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh,

People: Indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind,

Leader: And were by nature children of wrath,

People: Even as the rest.

Leader: But God, being rich in mercy,

People: Because of His great love

Leader: With which He loved us,

People: Even when we were dead in our transgressions,

Leader: Made us alive together with Christ

People: By grace you have been saved,

Prayer of Invocation and Confession

Gospel Absolution Text – Ephesians 2:6-8

*Hymn #604 – “Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart”

Scripture Reading – Romans 11:25-36

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 #39B – “And Now, O Lord”

Prayers of the Church & Lord's Prayer (sins) – *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

Reformation Creedal Reading – The Canons of Dort, 5.4.

Leader: Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God,
People: **Who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace,**
Leader: Yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace,
People: **So as to be seduced by and to comply with the lusts of the flesh;**
Leader: They must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer,
People: **That they may not be led into temptation.**
Leader: When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins
People: **By the flesh, the world, and Satan,**
Leader: But sometimes by the righteous permission of God
People: **Actually are drawn into these evils.**
Leader: This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints
People: **Described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates.**

Ministry of the Word

Prayer of Illumination

***Sermon Text** – Luke 15:11-32

***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 – “The Prodigal Son”

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 #681** – “How Gentle God's Commands”

***Benediction**

Announcements

- **August 8th**, Saturday is the rescheduled date for the **Pool Party / Picnic Pot-Luck** which will start 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.)
- The elders would like to take a **new photo of the entire church** sometime in September after church when the majority of members will be in attendance. Please email Pastor Doug what Sunday(s) you will NOT be in church in September.
- The elders are trying to revitalize the **Prayer Chain**. After every Sunday Service pastor Doug will email Sunday's prayer requests to the Prayer Chain leader who will send it out to the Prayer Chain for that week for prayer. If you have any prayer requests for our prayer chain, you can email them to Donna Ensminger at: **trcnwprayer@gmail.com**. (If you would like to join the Prayer Chain, also see Donna.)
- This church has experienced **cyber-attacks** before. Please be very discerning about any emails you get from the church, Pastor Doug or any church member. We will never ask for money via email or texts. When in doubt *call* Pastor Doug.
- Pastor Doug will be on vacation from August 3rd to 24th.
- **Sunday School** for all ages returns on Sunday, September 13th.
- The next in-person **Elder & Deacon Meeting** will be at Pastor Doug's house, in the morning, of **October 3rd**.
- **October 10th**, Saturday, there will our annual **Oktoberfest** at the Aldrich's. If possible, please bring a food item. (*Rain Date*: October 17th)
- The **4th Annual Christmas Party** will be on Friday, December 4th.
- TRC's **Annual Meeting** is after church, on Sunday, December 13th. The snow-day is December 20th.

Regular Studies & Gatherings (for the summer)

- Sunday School, Tuesday Morning Study & Wednesday Study have stopped for July & August.
 - **Saturday Morning Prayer Group** at the Gabelmann's. (Please call Sheryl to confirm if the group is meeting that day, 860-309-7250.)
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ONLINE RESOURCES

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

Music Coordinator: Cindy Rines
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

Luke 15:11-32

“The Prodigal Son”

A Sermon Series on Parables

July 26, 2026

Luke 15:11-13 – Inheritance Wasted

- 1) A man of some wealth has two sons. Luke 15:11
- 2) The younger son asks to receive his inheritance immediately. Luke 15:12
 - a) This is not asking for a loan against his future inheritance for something useful.
 - b) The younger son is asking that his father’s estate be divided up as if his father had just died in order to get his inheritance now.
 - c) According to the OT Law, at the father’s death, the older son Deut 21:17
would get a “double portion” so 2/3 of his father’s estate,
and the younger son 1/3 of the estate.
 - i) Though technically legal, it is highly dishonoring, to ask for Sirach 33:20-24
your father’s property before his death.
 - ii) The father could easily have refused, but instead agrees.
 - d) Remember the first commandment of the Second Table of the Law (the 5th Commandment)
about loving one’s neighbor: “*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may
be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.*” – Exodus 20:12
 - e) Though the older son gets his inheritance, he remains faithful to his father.
- 3) Soon after the younger son leaves with all his new wealth. Luke 15:13
 - a) He goes to a “distant country”.
 - i) Remember, ancient Israel was an ethnostate, Ex 12:48-49; Deut 7:1-6
where all the surrounding cultures are Ruth 1:16-17; 2:10-12; 4:9-17
viewed as dangerous, and they were forbidden Ezra 6:21; 9:1-2,10-12
to inter-marry with them. Neh 13:23-27; Mal 2:11-12
 - ii) So the younger son’s actions are only increasing in foolishness and sin.
 - b) He squanders/wastes all his wealth on “loose living”, living recklessly, Luke 15:30
sleeping with prostitutes and being without discipline.

Luke 15:14-19 – Fall & Repentance

- 1) The younger son spends everything and then a severe famine Luke 15:14
occurs in the country he is in.
 - a) Famines are incredibly dangerous Gen 41:53-57; 47:13-26; Lam 4:4-10
events in the ancient world. 2Kgs 6:24-29; 25:1-3; Jer 14:1-6,18

- b) The younger son becomes impoverished/destitute.
- c) He went from being well off, in his native land, surrounded by family, to now hiring himself out to some foreign stranger to go feed their pigs.
 - i) Pigs are uniquely smelly and they are considered unclean by OT standards. Lev 11:7-8; Deut 14:8
Is 65:4; 66:3,17
 - ii) It has gotten so desperate for the younger son that he would willingly eat the pig's food because no one has given him anything.
- 2) He then comes "*to his senses.*" – Luke 15:17
 - a) He realizes that even his father's servants have more food than he does, as he is dying of hunger.
 - b) He resolves to return to his father and says "*I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'*" – Luke 15:18-19
 - c) This is repentance: To change one's whole direction to the good. 2Chr 7:14; Ps 51:1-17; Prov 28:13; Is 55:6-7
Ezek 18:21-23,30-32; Acts 20:21; 2Cor 7:9-11
 - i) To mentally comprehend the problem and to change one's mind.
 - ii) Then to turn away from the evil and turn to the correct direction and go there.
 - iii) With confession of sin.
 - d) Note the confession is first to "heaven". Dan 4:26; Matt 21:25; Luke 20:4
 - i) This is an ancient Jewish custom of referring to God without naming Him directly, because His name is holy. Ex 20:7; Lev 22:32
Deut 28:58; Ps 111:9
Dan 4:26; Luke 15:18,2
 - ii) And his sin is against God, and against His Law and His created order, all of which is under heaven.
 - e) After that he repents to his father.
 - i) Thus covering both tablets of the Ten Commandments. Ex 20; Deut 5
 - ii) Because the younger son has sinned against God and his neighbor.

Luke 15:20-24 – The Father's Reaction

- 1) The younger son goes home. Luke 15:20
 - a) His father sees him far away and feels compassion for him.
 - b) He runs to his son, embraces him, and kisses him.
- 2) The son then gives the prepared speech, confessing his sin and his unworthiness.
- 3) "*But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;'*" - Luke 15:22-23
 - a) In the ancient world **clothing** represented one's rank, dignity and standing. Gen 41:42; Ex 28:2,40; Esth 6:7-9
Zech 3:3-5; Luke 15:15-16,22-24; James 2:1-4
 - i) Many ancient cultures had laws on what different social classes could or couldn't wear.
 - ii) The best robe visually and culturally immediately changes the son from a pig-feeder to a man of note and standing.

- b) At the very least the **ring** marks his son; that he is restored and not merely some hired servant. Gen 41:42; Esth 3:10; 8:2,8 Hag 2:23; Luke 15:22
- i) If it was a signet ring, it would have a greater meaning.
 - ii) Showing the son is now officially part of the household with power and authority over the household's legal affairs.
- c) The **sandals** signify freedom, dignity, and restored household status. Ex 12:11; 2Sam 15:30 Is 20:2-4; Luke 15:22
- i) Slaves and the very poor often went barefoot in the ancient world.
 - ii) Thus even his shoes show his new status.
- d) Remember **food** is rare in the ancient world and as we just read famines do happen. Gen 41:53-57; Deut 28:53-57; 1Sam 28:24-25 Neh 8:10-12; Is 25:6-9; Amos 6:4; Rev 19:6-9
- i) Feasts, and parties, were rare, and took much effort and money.
 - ii) The fattened calf was an animal specially prepared for an exceptional feast, not ordinary daily food.
 - iii) Killing the fattened calf meant a costly, rare and important celebration was happening.
 - iv) A feast, as the opposite of famine, shows abundance, joy, fellowship, peace and belonging.

4) Why all this excessive celebration?

- a) The father explains in the most critical line of the text:
Luke 15:24 – *“for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.” And they began to celebrate.*
- b) Where he was, was of no small thing: He was spiritually dead and lost.
- c) But now he has come to life again and has been found.
- d) That is the reason to celebrate.

Luke 15:25-30 – The Older Son's Reaction

- 1) The older son was in the field and hears the celebrating in his father's house. Luke 15:25-27
- a) He finds out through a servant that his brother has returned.
 - b) And his father has killed the fattened calf *“because he has received him back safe and sound.”* – Luke 15:27b
- 2) The older son becomes angry and refuses to go in. Luke 15:28-30
- a) The father goes out and pleads with him.
 - b) The older son bitterly complains.
 - i) He has served his father faithfully for many years.
 - ii) He has never neglected his father's command.
 - c) And yet the father had never even given him a young goat to celebrate with his friends. Gen 18:7-8; 27:9; Judg 6:19; 13:15 1Sam 28:24-25; 1Kgs 1:9; Amos 6:4
 - i) A young goat is a much smaller and less costly meal than the very special fattened calf.
 - ii) It is the difference between a modest household gathering and a major very special feast.

- d) The older son is so angry that he doesn't even call the younger son "brother."
- e) He says, "*but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.*" – Luke 15:30

Luke 15:31-32 – The Father's Reply

- 1) The father reassures the older son. Luke 15:31-32
 - a) The father affirms that he has always been with the father.
 - b) He affirms that everything of the father belongs to the older son.
- 2) Then the father says "*But we had to celebrate and rejoice*". – Luke 15:32a
 - a) There has to be a celebration?
 - b) Why?
 - c) To repeat the critical verse: "*for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.*" – Luke 15:32b

How to Interpret the Parable of the Prodigal Son

- 1) The exact identification of the younger and older sons has been debated throughout the history of the church.
 - a) The younger son could be: Repentant sinners (tax collectors), gentiles, or backslidden Christians
 - b) The Older son could be: Pharisees & Scribes, Jews or Christians remain in the church.
- 3) But which one is right?
 - a) We Protestants believe there is only one meaning in any text.
 - i) That we strive to find the original, plain, meaning of the author.
 - ii) This does not mean there can't be layers to a single meaning, however.
 - iii) Especially with such genres as poetry, parables and apocalyptic literature.
 - b) The main meaning of the parable is that those whom God has made can wander into great evil, being lost and almost dead to God.
 - i) In the broadest sense, all humanity, who are made in the image of God, and have been given dominion over God's creation, start off this life lost and dead, unless they repent. Gen 1:26-28; 9:6
Ps 8:4-8; John 3:3-8;
Rom 1-8; Eph 2:1-10
2Tim 2:25-26; Titus 3:3-8
 - ii) Or those who have been given the Old Covenant, but reject the New, are also lost and spiritually dead, unless they repent. Jer 31:31-34; Matt 3:7-10
John 3:3-10,18,36; Acts 2:36-41
Rom 9:1-8; Heb 8:6-13
 - iii) Even those in the church, can become lost and flirt with death, and must repent. Matt 7:21-23; John 10:27-29
Acts 8:18-24; 1Cor 11:27-32
Heb 3:12-14; 1John 2:19
 - c) This parable also teaches that those who remain should not become angry or jealous when one of their brothers repent and is restored. They should rejoice as God the Father does. Ezek 18:23,32; Matt 18:12-14
Luke 15:4-10,20-32
Rom 12:15; 2Cor 2:6-8
Gal 6:1; Eph 4:1-3,31-32
- 4) Let's ponder each son.

The Younger Son

- 1) The younger son shows us how dangerous sin really is.
 - a) We are born spiritually dead, children of Satan, and enemies of God and devoid of any hope in this life by our own actions. Gen 6:5; Jer 17:9; John 8:42-44
Rom 3:10-23; 5:6-10
Eph 2:1-10; Col 1:13-14
 - b) If you really want to understand Christianity, and walk after Christ, you must fully embrace how bad the problem is.
 - c) Because the more you water-down sin, the more you will have to water-down the solution (i.e. Christ), which at best is delusional, or at worst dead.
- 2) The younger son shows us how dangerous back-sliding is.
 - a) That is why the Bible uses extreme language when it comes to our walk in sanctification: That we have to kill (i.e. mortify) sin in our life and cut it off. Matt 5:29-30; Mark 9:43-48
Rom 8:12-13; 13:12-14
Col 3:5-10; Heb 12:1-4
 - b) Because the more you wander away from God's household, the church, i.e. Christ's spiritual body on earth, the more likely you are lost and maybe dead. Matt 18:15-20; John 10:27-29
Acts 2:41-47; 1John 2:19
Heb 3:12-14; 10:24-31
- 3) What "saves" the youngest son?
 - a) That he comes to "his senses", literally "he came to himself."
 - b) He is awakened from the inside, which is solely a work of God's grace through the Holy Spirit. Ezek 36:25-27; Acts 16:14
John 3:3-8; 6:63-65
Eph 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-7
 - c) That you have any faith in Christ at all should give you much fear and trembling at God's mercy toward you. Ps 130:3-4; Rom 9:15-16
1Cor 4:7; Eph 2:8-9
Phil 2:12-13; Heb 12:28-29
 - i) Which should cause you to be merciful and kind to all those around you, especially those whom God has restored. Mic 6:8; Matt 5:7; 18:21-35
Luke 6:35-36; Eph 4:31-32
Col 3:12-13
 - ii) If God has chosen to forgive anyone, who are you to question?
 - iii) What is that old excellent saying? "But by the grace of God go I."
- 4) Full restoration is always possible, because salvation is by grace alone.
 - a) But true repentance is not just about being sorry. Prov 28:13; Is 55:6-7; Ezek 18:30-32
Luke 3:7-14; Acts 20:21; 2Cor 7:9-11
 - i) It is a complete change of mind.
 - ii) To fully turn away from sin, the world, Satan, and your fleshly desires, and turn to Christ.
 - iii) And actually go back to God, mentally, spiritually and physically.
 - b) There will be earthly consequences for sin in this life. Num 20:10-12; 2Sam 12:9-14
Prov 6:27-33; Gal 6:7-8; Heb 12:5-11
 - i) The younger son lost time and money, probably did damage to his health, his reputation, etc.
 - ii) But there is always hope and life, in Christ, in this life and perfectly in the next. Ps 16:9-11; John 11:25-26
Rom 5:1-5; 8:18-25
1Pet 1:3-5; Rev 21:1-5

The Older Son

- 1) But what about the older son?
- 2) On one level his anger seems justified.
 - a) During Jesus' time, before the cross, the Pharisees and scribes worked hard at being righteous and now all these horrible sinners and tax-gatherers are coming to Christ, and He is welcoming them!
 - b) Or for the OT Jews, they have striven to be faithful for thousands of years, and with Christ all these unclean Gentiles are coming in!
 - c) Or even in the church: You have perfect attendance for decades, and have given large sums of money to the church, and some guy who was baptized as a child and has lived like a heathen for 90 years, then at the very end comes to Christ and he is celebrated?!
 - i) Or how about the truly evil man who comes to Christ at the end of his life, does he get to go to heaven like everyone else?
 - ii) *Example:* Shirō Ishii (1892-1959), the Japanese biological weapons expert and head of the infamous Unit 731, which tortured to death thousands of civilians and prisoners of war (including Americans) to develop chemical weapons.
 - He was captured by the USA but given immunity because of his knowledge.
 - And then given a cushy job working for the US Government.
 - His daughter said he came to Christ right before his death.
 - If it was a true conversion, he is in heaven, right?
 - And you rejoice at his conversion, right?
 - Because you do believe that we are all dead in sin, and that salvation is only through Christ, and God gives grace to whom He chooses according to His sovereign plan, right?
 - iii) I hope so, for your good.
- 3) Though the younger son did great evil, the Lord was merciful to him, and he was given true faith and repentance, which always produces humility and good works.
- 4) Question: What happened to the older son?
 - a) Did he repent? Did he remain angry? Did he leave? Did he stay?
 - b) The text doesn't say.
 - c) And that is a fierce warning.
- 5) Being visibly inside God's household is a great blessing and is commanded.
 - a) But what saves us is true faith which brings humility.
 - b) And a true love for God and our neighbor.
- 6) Let us go to His Table and believe Him that we are in His house.