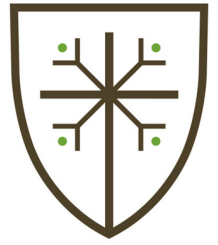




SUMMER PSALMS

An Ordinary Time Sermon Series 2026

SERMON NOTES



July 26, 2026

SERMON INFO

TITLE

"Rest in the Wilderness"

PREACHER

Rev. David Vilches

TEXTS

Psalm 23

Acts 20:28-32

Matthew 11:25-30

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you currently find rest? Do you think true rest is possible?
2. How are you being called to slow down?
3. Do you view the Lord as your friend?
4. What does it look like to prioritize worship as a way to draw near to God, our shepherd and friend?

SERMON IN SUMMARY

David continued the journey through psalms by calling attention to the exhaustion and bewilderment inherent in our modern life, in our wilderness. Psalm 23, the focus for today's sermon, reveals that true rest is possible.

The Shepherd

The psalms are artistic and deeply personal; they help us feel. In order to let them guide us in that particular way, we must pay attention to elements such as the images, structures, and metaphors used. The first main metaphor is the Lord as a shepherd. God's revealed name, LORD (capitalized, signifying the usage of YHWH), evoking the concept of the eternal, immortal, invisible, true God, is joined with "shepherd," a lowly role, often given to the youngest son, that entails working all day and all night to ensure the flock's protection. God protects us, his flock, by making us lie down in green pastures and leading us beside still waters. The imagery of healthy pastures and full bodies of water, paired with the guidance of the Lord, shows that God wants abundance for his flock; God goes beyond what is needed to provide, and not only for our bodies but for our souls. The later use of "restore my soul" calls to mind rescuing a lost sheep or healing a sick and wounded sheep. Taking care of the flock glorifies the Lord even as the Lord's provision yields true rest and goodness.

To receive this rest, we must first admit that we are sheep, weak, foolish, and wandering creatures wholly dependent on God. Practically, that looks like submitting our entire lives to the Lord. We may practice Sabbath, a day dedicated to God, and adopt a slower, more intentional pace, like our shepherd. We can say no to the fast-paced life, no to wanting new things just because we can, no to the fear of missing out, and more. We can adopt deeper prayer habits, memorizing and singing psalms as part of our daily rhythms in order to draw nearer to him.

The Friend

We should want to draw near to God because he is our friend, the second main metaphor used to describe God in Psalm 23. God's friendship takes the form of radical hospitality when he acts as a host, "you prepare a table before me," and takes care of his guests by anointing the head with oil. Such treatment from God is an image of true contentment, internally and externally, as evidenced by the image of an overflowing cup. All of this treatment is an affirmation of the goodness and mercy (which can also be translated as steadfast love) that we can only find in God. However, like the wayward sheep we are, we turn from this friendship and make temporary things like our spouse, our children, vacation, work, or even school an ultimate thing. We can forgo this pattern and return to God through many avenues of his grace, but first and foremost by participating in worship. Worship is where we come to the Lord's house to feast on a meal together, all the while letting God's word, prayer, and sacrament overwhelm us with grace and lead us to true rest, just as Psalm 23 describes.

The metaphor of the shepherd highlights the Lord's presence with us on the journey, and the metaphor of a friend highlights the destination, sitting face to face with God. True rest is possible; our longing can be fulfilled in and through the Lord by being at his table, by drawing near to him personally, a hint of eternity with him.