

The Rustling of the Mulberry Trees **Discussion Notes - May 31, 2026**

1. Think of a time when waiting turned out to be the right decision. What made it hard to wait, and what was the outcome?

In 2 Samuel 5, after David's first victory over the Philistines, the enemy returns. Rather than relying on what worked before, David inquires of the Lord again and God gives him a completely different strategy. Three commands shape the message: Wait (circle around and do not charge ahead), Weep (the Valley of Rephaim is also the valley of weeping, and God is present in those seasons), and Watch (listen for the rustling in the tops of the balsam trees - God's signal that He has already gone before you). The sermon calls us to recognize that spiritual opposition is ongoing, that God's delays are never denials, and that painful seasons are preparation, not punishment. When God signals, we move; not before.

Read 2 Samuel 5:23-24

And when David inquired of the LORD, he said, "You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees. And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the LORD has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines." (ESV)

The Valley of Rephaim was a wide, fertile plain southwest of Jerusalem. It was prime terrain for Philistine chariots and a place where David had just won a victory. Yet God does not let past success become a formula. Rather than a front attack, He directs David to circle around behind the enemy and wait for a specific sign; the sound of marching in the treetops. Jewish tradition associates this sound with angelic movement. God was not merely advising David; He was promising to lead the charge Himself. David's role was obedience and timing, not strategy.

2. The sermon highlights three commands God gave David: Wait, Weep, and Watch. Which of these postures is most difficult for you in your current season, and why?

Read Psalm 27:13-14

I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD! (ESV)

Psalm 27 is a psalm of David, likely written during a season of real danger; enemies surrounding him, possibly during Absalom's rebellion or years of fleeing Saul. Verse 13 is a declaration of faith in the face of present threat: "I believe I shall see..." The Hebrew carries the sense of resolved confidence, not wishful thinking. Verse 14 is a double command to wait; bookending an exhortation to be strong and courageous. Biblical waiting is not passive; it is active trust that holds its ground while God works.

3. Is there an area of your life right now where you feel pressure to act before God has signaled? What would it practically look like to "circle around" and wait rather than charge ahead?

Read 1 Peter 5:8-9

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (ESV)

Peter wrote this letter to scattered believers facing persecution, and his warning echoes the sermon's opening observation: the enemy never quits. The image of a prowling lion speaks to a patient, opportunistic adversary who looks for moments of lowered guard. These are moments

of ease, past victory, or spiritual exhaustion. Peter's prescription is not fear but sobriety and watchfulness, grounded in the awareness that suffering is not unique to you. The community of faith faces the same battle, which means no one needs to fight alone or assume something has gone uniquely wrong when opposition returns.

4. How does knowing the enemy is persistent change the way you think about seasons of peace or spiritual victory in your own life?

Read Psalm 30:5

For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. (ESV)

Psalm 30 is a psalm of dedication and thanksgiving, written by David after deliverance from a life-threatening illness or crisis. Verse 5 is one of the most beloved promises in all of Scripture because it does not deny the reality of weeping; it simply refuses to give it the final word. The contrast is between "a moment" and "a lifetime," between "the night" and "the morning." The valley of Rephaim, the valley of weeping mentioned in the sermon, is real but it is not permanent. God's favor outlasts the season of pain, and the morning is always coming.

5. If God is already going before you, if the angels are already marching in the treetops, what would it look like this week to actively watch for His signal rather than either rushing ahead or standing still out of fear?

Prayer Points

- For ears to hear God's voice and the patience to wait for His timing before moving.
- For perseverance and hope in the middle of weeping seasons, trusting that joy is coming.
- For spiritual alertness - never dropping our guard and staying watchful against the schemes of the enemy.

DEEPER DIVE: David - A Life of Waiting on God

Few biblical figures illustrate the tension between urgent action and patient obedience better than David. He was anointed king as a young man but waited roughly fifteen years before taking the throne. He was a proven warrior, yet again and again he refused to move until God gave the signal. The events of 2 Samuel 5 are not an isolated moment; they are the culmination of a lifetime of learning to wait, weep, and watch. David's story shows us that the version of the king God was preparing required the years of caves, wilderness, and enemy pursuit to build. What looked like delay was always development.

Read 2 Samuel 5:17-21

When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. But David heard of it and went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. And David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?" And the LORD said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." And David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. And he said, "The LORD has burst through my enemies before me like a bursting flood." Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim. And the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away. (ESV)

This first battle establishes the pattern for everything that follows. Notice that David does not assume the outcome, even though God had already told him he would be king. He asks. He seeks. The Hebrew word for "inquired" (sha'al) carries the weight of formal consultation. This is not a quick prayer before battle, it is deliberate, dependent seeking. God responds with a direct promise: "I will certainly give." David wins decisively and names the place Baal-perazim, meaning "the Lord who bursts through." The victory is God's, which means the obedience was David's. He received the signal and moved.

Read 2 Samuel 5:22-25

And the Philistines came up yet again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the LORD, he said, "You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees. And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the LORD has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines." And David did as the LORD commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer. (ESV)

The enemy returns and God changes the plan entirely. This is critical: the first battle could have become a template. David knew the terrain, he knew God had blessed the frontal assault, he knew it worked. Yet he inquires again and receives a different strategy. God sends him around to the rear and tells him to wait by the balsam trees. The signal will be auditory, a sound of marching in the treetops that indicates the angel of the Lord moving through the canopy ahead of the army. When David hears it, he is to rouse himself immediately. The Hebrew suggests readiness, a soldier at attention, poised to move the moment the signal comes. And David does exactly as commanded. The result is a rout from Geba all the way to Gezer.

Read Psalm 62:1-5

For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken. How long will all of you attack a man to batter him, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence? They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse. For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. (ESV)

Psalm 62 reveals the interior posture behind David's military obedience. The Hebrew word translated "waits in silence" (damiyah) means to be still, to cease striving, to be at rest. This is not emotional numbness or defeated resignation. It is a settled confidence in the character of God even while enemies press in. David is likely surrounded by betrayal (verse 4 describes those who bless with their mouths but curse inwardly), yet he returns twice to the same declaration: "For God alone... wait in silence." The repetition is deliberate. This is a man talking himself back to the only foundation that holds. Waiting, in David's theology, is not the absence of action, it is the practice of redirecting every anxious impulse back toward God.

Deeper Dive Discussion Questions

1. David inquired of the Lord both times the Philistines attacked, even though he had just won a victory using a strategy God gave him. What does it reveal about David's character that he did not assume the second battle would go the same way as the first, and what would it look like for us to have the same posture after a spiritual victory?
2. God's signal was a sound - the marching in the tops of the balsam trees. It was subtle enough to miss if David was not listening, and specific enough to require attentiveness. How do you personally learn to recognize God's signals in your life, and what conditions make it harder or easier to hear them?

3. Psalm 62 describes waiting as an active, repeated discipline - David has to tell himself twice to wait in silence. What does this suggest about what waiting on God actually requires of us, and where have you seen that kind of intentional, fought-for patience bear fruit in your own life?