**2024 LENTEN MIDWEEK READINGS**

**Obedience of Christ for our Righteousness**

February 21, 2024

**Psalm: Psalm 16 (NKJV)**

Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.

O my soul, you have said to the Lord,
“You are my Lord,
My goodness is nothing apart from You.”
As for the saints who are on the earth,
“They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.”

Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god;
Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer,
Nor take up their names on my lips.

O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You maintain my lot.
The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Yes, I have a good inheritance.

I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel;
My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.
I have set the Lord always before me;
Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

**Prophecy: Isaiah 50:5-10 (NKJV)**

The Lord God has opened My ear;
And I was not rebellious,
Nor did I turn away.
I gave My back to those who struck Me,
And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard;
I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

“For the Lord God will help Me;
Therefore I will not be disgraced;
Therefore I have set My face like a flint,
And I know that I will not be ashamed.
He is near who justifies Me;
Who will contend with Me?
Let us stand together.
Who is My adversary?
Let him come near Me.
Surely the Lord God will help Me;
Who is he who will condemn Me?
Indeed they will all grow old like a garment;
The moth will eat them up.

“Who among you fears the Lord?
Who obeys the voice of His Servant?
Who walks in darkness
And has no light?
Let him trust in the name of the Lord
And rely upon his God.

**Epistle: Romans 5: 1-21 (NKJV)**

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in

tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Gospel: John 6: 35-40 (NKJV)**

And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

**Collect:** O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that, following our Savior, we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Christ’s Suffering as Payment and Sacrifice for Sin**

February 28, 2024

**Psalm: Psalm 103 (NKJV)**

Bless the Lord, O my soul;
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
Who satisfies your mouth with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

The Lord executes righteousness
And justice for all who are oppressed.
He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the children of Israel.
The Lord is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
As a father pities his children,
So the Lord pities those who fear Him.
For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass;

As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
And its place remembers it no more.
But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children’s children,
To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them.

The Lord has established His throne in heaven,
And His kingdom rules over all.

Bless the Lord, you His angels,
Who excel in strength, who do His word,
Heeding the voice of His word.
Bless the Lord, all you His hosts,
You ministers of His, who do His pleasure.
Bless the Lord, all His works,
In all places of His dominion.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

**Prophecy: Isaiah 52:13—53:12(NKJV)**

Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently;
He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.
Just as many were astonished at you,
So His visage was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men;
So shall He sprinkle many nations.
Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;
For what had not been told them they shall see,
And what they had not heard they shall consider.

Who has believed our report?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,

And as a root out of dry ground.
He has no form or comeliness;
And when we see Him,

There is no beauty that we should desire Him.
He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.
He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.
And they made His grave with the wicked—
But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him;
He has put Him to grief.

When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities.
Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
Because He poured out His soul unto death,
And He was numbered with the transgressors,
And He bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.

**Epistle: Galatians 3:10-14 (NKJV)**

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

**Gospel: John 3:13-21 (NKJV)**

No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

**Collect:** O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**God Himself Punished Christ**

March 6, 2024

**Psalm: Psalm 22 (NKJV)**

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?
Why are You so far from helping Me,
And from the words of My groaning?
O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;
And in the night season, and am not silent.

But You are holy,
Enthroned in the praises of Israel.
Our fathers trusted in You;
They trusted, and You delivered them.
They cried to You, and were delivered;
They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

But I am a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised by the people.
All those who see Me ridicule Me;
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
“He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him;
Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”

But You are He who took Me out of the womb;
You made Me trust while on My mother’s breasts.
I was cast upon You from birth.
From My mother’s womb
You have been My God.
Be not far from Me,
For trouble is near;
For there is none to help.

Many bulls have surrounded Me;
Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.
They gape at Me with their mouths,

Like a raging and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And My tongue clings to My jaws;
You have brought Me to the dust of death.

For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;
I can count all My bones.
They look and stare at Me.
They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.

But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me;
O My Strength, hasten to help Me!
Deliver Me from the sword,
My precious life from the power of the dog.
Save Me from the lion’s mouth
And from the horns of the wild oxen!

You have answered Me.

I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
You who fear the Lord, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.

My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;

I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the Lord.
Let your heart live forever!

All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the Lord,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.
For the kingdom is the Lord’s,
And He rules over the nations.

All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.

A posterity shall serve Him.
It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,
They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,
That He has done this.

**Prophecy: Zechariah 13:1-9 (NKJV)**

“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

“It shall be in that day,” says the Lord of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land. It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the Lord.’ And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies.

“And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive. But he will say, ‘I am no

prophet, I am a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.’ And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will answer, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,
Against the Man who is My Companion,”
Says the Lord of hosts.
“Strike the Shepherd,
And the sheep will be scattered;
Then I will turn My hand against the little ones.
And it shall come to pass in all the land,”
Says the Lord,
“That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die,
But one-third shall be left in it:
I will bring the one-third through the fire,
Will refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them.
I will say, ‘This is My people’;
And each one will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’ ”

**Epistle: Acts 4:23-31 (NKJV)**

And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

‘Why did the nations rage,
And the people plot vain things?
The kings of the earth took their stand,
And the rulers were gathered together
Against the Lord and against His Christ.’

“For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever

Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

**Gospel: Mark 14:26-50 (NKJV)**

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written:

‘I will strike the Shepherd,
And the sheep will be scattered.’

“But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”

Peter said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.”

Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.”

But he spoke more vehemently, “If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”

And they all said likewise.

Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.”

He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”

Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

Then He came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely.”

As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.

Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”

Then they all forsook Him and fled.

**Collect:** O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Christ’s Suffering as Proof of God’s Love for Us**

March 13, 2024

**Psalm: Psalm 85 (NKJV)**

Lord, You have been favorable to Your land;
You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.
You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people;
You have covered all their sin. Selah
You have taken away all Your wrath;
You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger.

Restore us, O God of our salvation,
And cause Your anger toward us to cease.
Will You be angry with us forever?
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?
Will You not revive us again,
That Your people may rejoice in You?
Show us Your mercy, Lord,
And grant us Your salvation.

I will hear what God the Lord will speak,
For He will speak peace
To His people and to His saints;
But let them not turn back to folly.
Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,
That glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
And righteousness shall look down from heaven.
Yes, the Lord will give what is good;
And our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness will go before Him,
And shall make His footsteps our pathway.

**Prophecy: Hosea 14:1-9 (NKJV)**

O Israel, return to the Lord your God,
For you have stumbled because of your iniquity;
Take words with you,
And return to the Lord.
Say to Him,
“Take away all iniquity;
Receive us graciously,
For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.
Assyria shall not save us,
We will not ride on horses,
Nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, ‘You are our gods.’
For in You the fatherless finds mercy.”

“I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely,
For My anger has turned away from him.
I will be like the dew to Israel;
He shall grow like the lily,
And lengthen his roots like Lebanon.
His branches shall spread;
His beauty shall be like an olive tree,
And his fragrance like Lebanon.
Those who dwell under his shadow shall return;
They shall be revived like grain,
And grow like a vine.
Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

“Ephraim shall say, ‘What have I to do anymore with idols?’
I have heard and observed him.

I am like a green cypress tree;
Your fruit is found in Me.”

Who is wise?
Let him understand these things.

Who is prudent?
Let him know them.
For the ways of the Lord are right;
The righteous walk in them,
But transgressors stumble in them.

**Epistle: 1 John 4:7-21 (NKJV)**

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.

If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

**Gospel: John 15:1-17 (NKJV)**

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.

**Collect:** Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**As Christ Suffered, So Shall We**

March 20, 2024

**Psalm: Psalm 119:65-72 (NKJV)**

You have dealt well with Your servant,
O Lord, according to Your word.
Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
For I believe Your commandments.
Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.
You are good, and do good;
Teach me Your statutes.
The proud have forged a lie against me,
But I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart.
Their heart is as fat as grease,
But I delight in Your law.
It is good for me that I have been afflicted,
That I may learn Your statutes.
The law of Your mouth is better to me
Than thousands of coins of gold and silver.

**Prophecy: Job 1:6-22 (NKJV)**

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?”

So Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.”

Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?”

So Satan answered the Lord and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”

And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.”

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house; and a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!”

While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!”

While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!”

While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!”

Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
And naked shall I return there.

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away;
Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

**Epistle: 1 Peter 4:12-19 (NKJV)**

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now

“If the righteous one is scarcely saved,
Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

**Gospel: John 15:18—16:4 (NKJV)**

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.

“And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

**Collect:** Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.