



Blue
Christmas
a service of healing and hope

December 21,
2019

Blue Christmas

Pastor Gary
Spraker

The Living Waters Parish United Methodist Church

**Words of Welcome:
Let us quietly gather in prayer.**

**The Advent season is one of
wonder. It is a time of hopeful
anticipation. It is a season of
promise.**

The longer nights and the gray clouds seem to provide the perfect background for the lights and the tinsel. The decorations are everywhere we turn. But for many of us, especially those of us gathered here,

Christmas is a harsh reminder of life that once was. So we gather not so much in hopeful anticipation, but in the cloud of despair. While so many are ready to sing “Joy to the World,” we gather tonight, on the longest

**Night of the year, as those that
mourn or who encounter a deep
sadness. We gather now to carve
out a time of quiet reflection. We
gather to shed tears if they come,
to hold hands if they are available,
and to know that we are not**

alone. Whether this is the first Christmas without someone you love, or if you seem to be hurting from loss for as long as you remember. Whether you are experiencing a deep depression or just plain don't feel joyful.

**We gather to be reminded that it
is okay to mourn, even at
Christmas. Christ is here in Glory.
He has come to meet you right
where you are.**

The background is a dark blue night sky with a bright, multi-pointed star in the upper center. Below the star, the silhouettes of three people are visible, appearing to be in a state of worship or prayer. The overall scene is serene and spiritual.

A CALL TO WORSHIP

From Isaiah 9

**The people who walked in
darkness have seen a great
light; on those who lived in a
land of deep shadow a light has
shone.**

**For the yoke that was weighing
upon them, and the burden upon
their shoulders, thou hast broken
in pieces, O God, our Redeemer.**

Opening prayer (in unison)



**God of Mercy, hear out prayer in
this Advent Season for ourselves
and our families who live with the
painful memories of loss. We ask
for strength for today,
courage for tomorrow**

and peace for the past.

**We ask these things in the name
of Jesus Christ, Your Son and our
Lord, who shares our life,
our joy, and our sorrow.**

**Death and new birth,
despair, and promise. Amen.**

COME THOU LONG EXPECTED

Jesus



#196 UMH

Come, thou long
expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;



from our fears
and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee



Israel's strength
and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;



dear desire
of every nation,
joy of every longing heart



Born thy people
to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,



born to reign
in us forever,
now thy gracious
kingdom bring.



By thine own
eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;



by thine all
sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.



A MOMENT OF REMEMBRANCE/

**THE SHARING OF
THOUGHTS FOR ALL/**

JOYS AND CONCERNS



Silent Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 40:25-31

Our first scripture reading comes from the Book of Isaiah. It was written in a time when many of the people of Judah had been taken as captives into exile in Babylon and were feeling crushed and without hope.

L. I will lift up mine eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?

P. My help comes from God who made heaven and earth.



L. God will not suffer your foot to be moved. The one who keeps you will not slumber.

P. Behold the one who keeps Israel shall not slumber or sleep.



L. The holy one is your keeper.
The Holy one is your shade on
your right hand.

**P. The sun shall not hurt you by
day nor the moon by night.**



L. Our God shall preserve you from
all evil and shall preserve your
soul.

**P. Our God shall preserve your
going out and your coming in from
this time forth and even forever
more.**



New Testament Reading

Gospel of Matthew 1:18-24

The story of the first Christmas is not really a happy story but a story about life in the real world. Mary of Nazareth, who is engaged to the carpenter Joseph, discovers she is pregnant. Joseph does not want to embarrass Mary and plans

to break the engagement privately. This was not an easy time for this couple. Their country was under Roman occupation and King Herod who ruled Palestine for the Romans was known for his cruelty. These are not exactly ideal conditions for bringing a child into the world.

**In the midst of their turmoil, an angel-
God's messenger- speaks to Joseph in a
dream and tells him to proceed with his
marriage to Mary.**

New Testament Reading

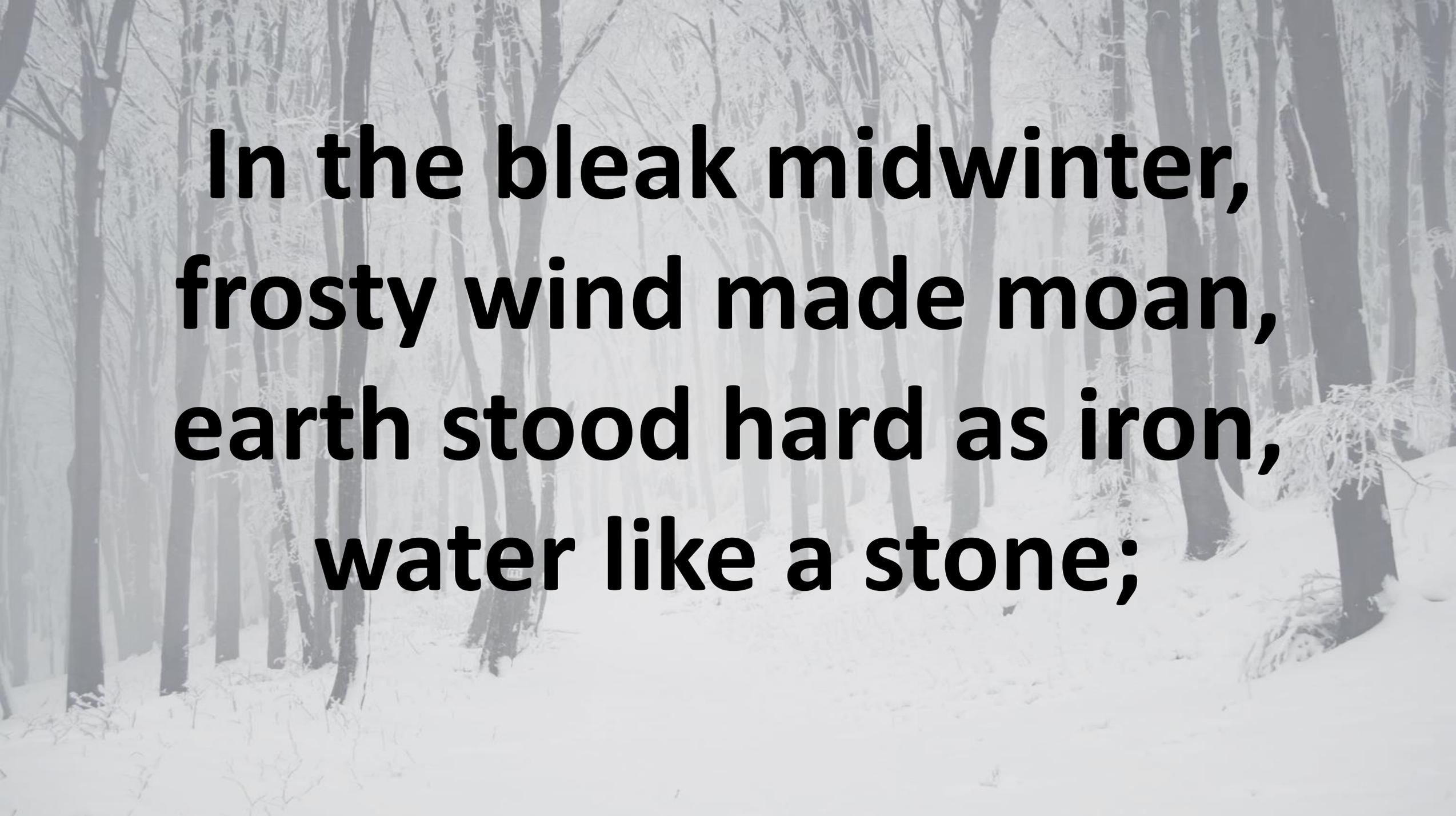
Gospel of Matthew 2:7-23

In the midst of Mary and Joseph's joy over the safe birth of their son Jesus, a new crisis looms. King Herod orders the death of all children under 2 and so the Holy Family have to flee as refugees to Egypt.

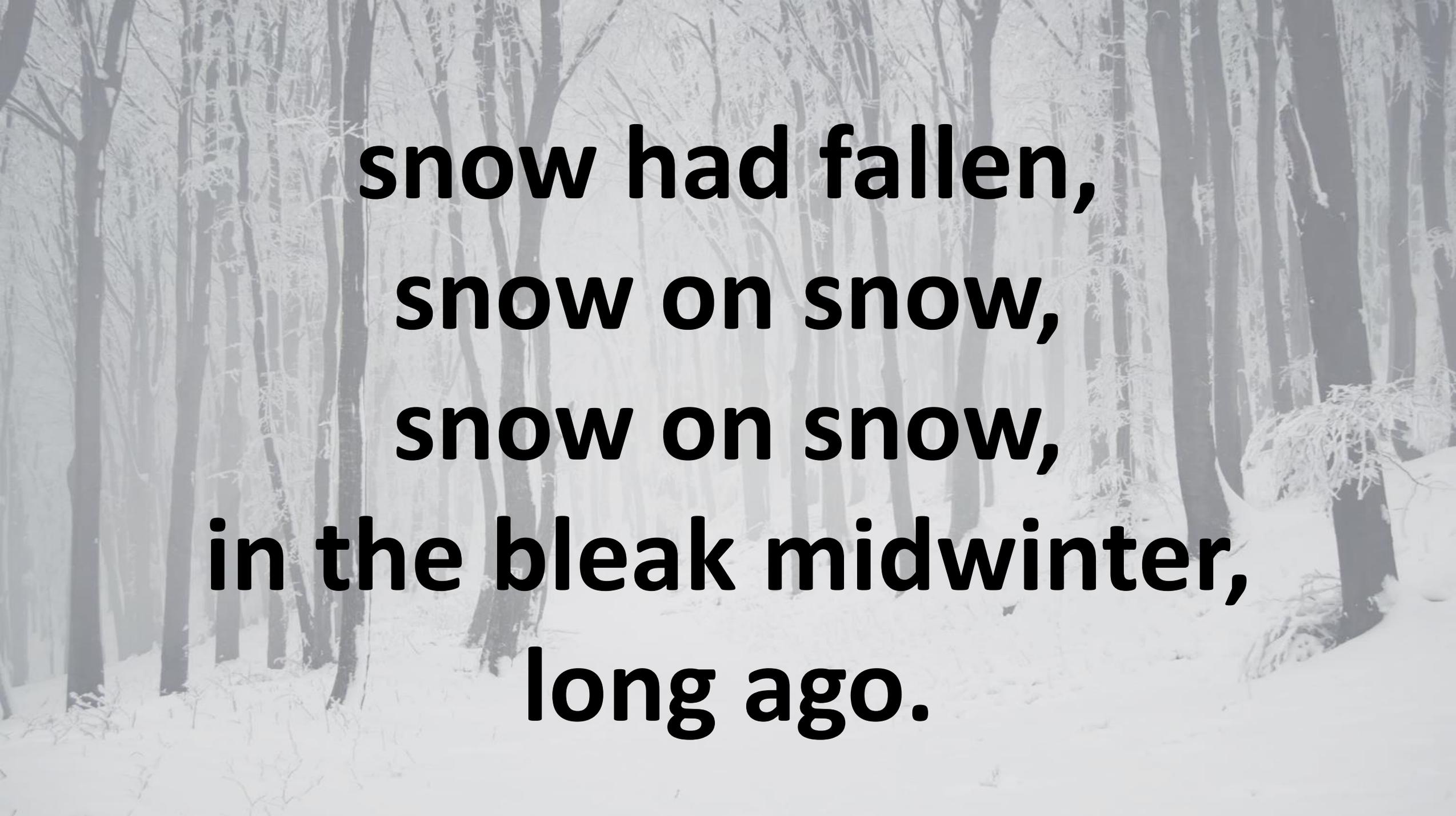
There they live for several years until King Herod dies and it is safe to return. Mary and Joseph felt God's presence with them through all the hardships they had to face.



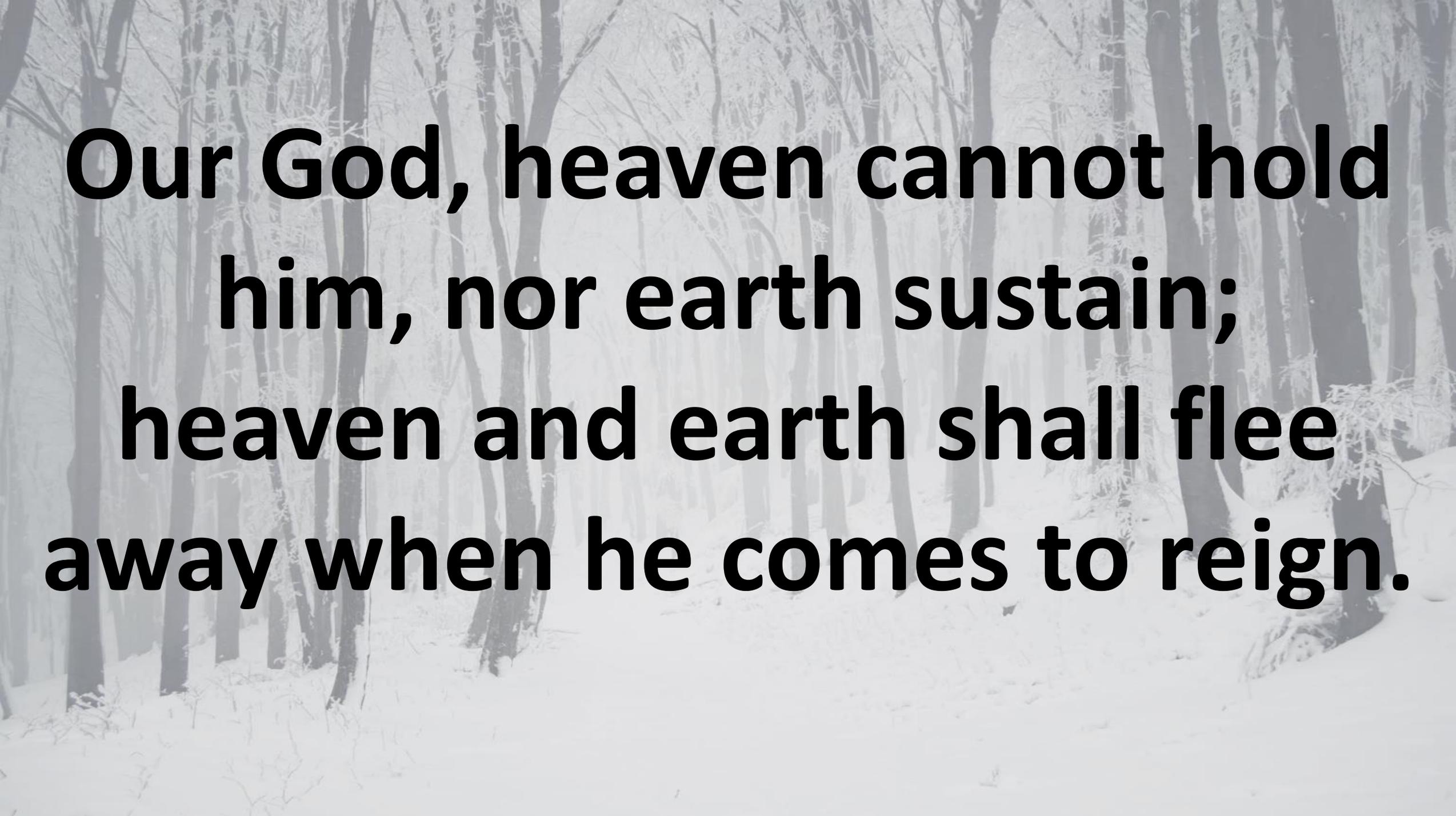
In the Bleak Midwinter - Hymn Story



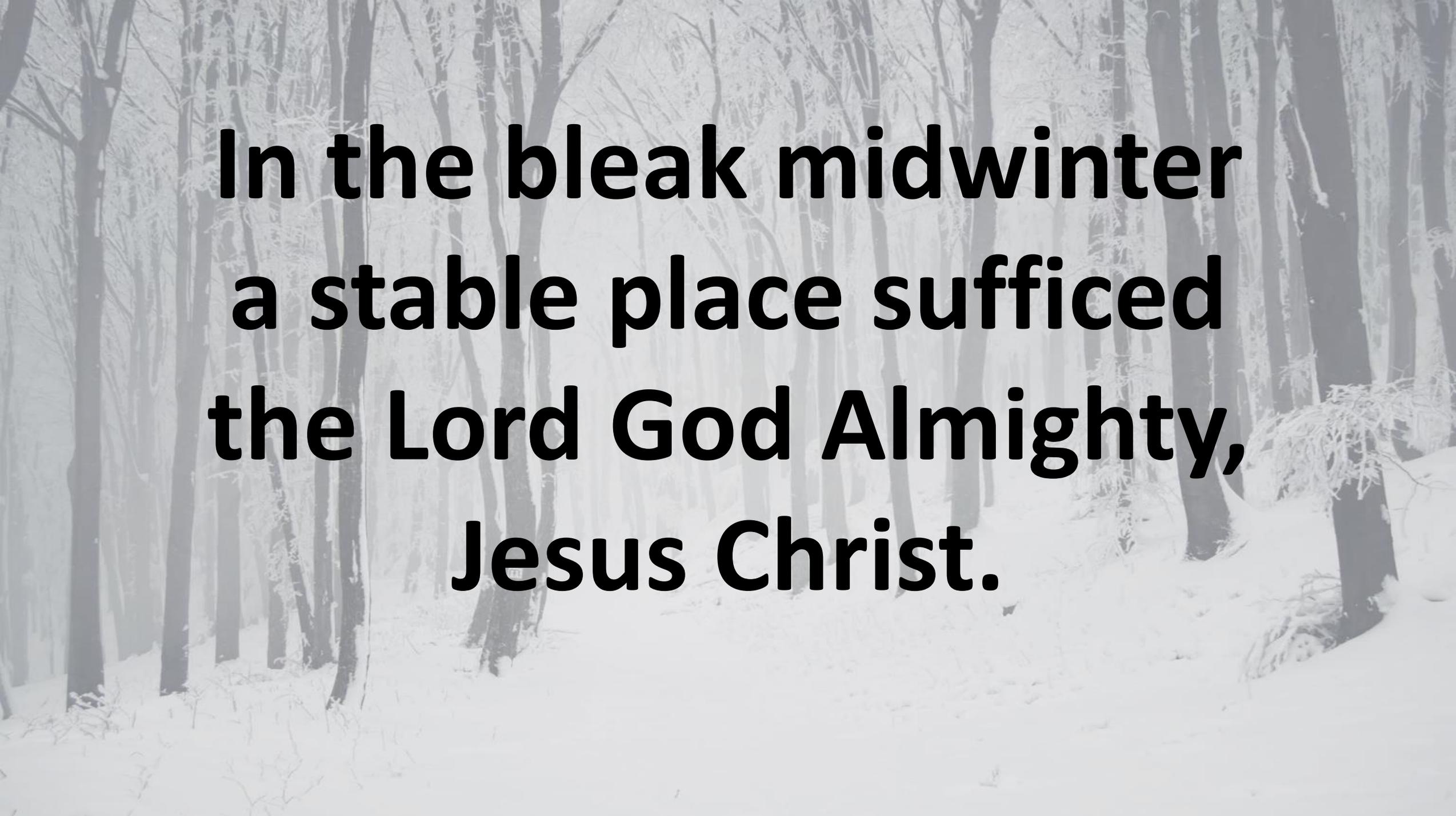
**In the bleak midwinter,
frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;**



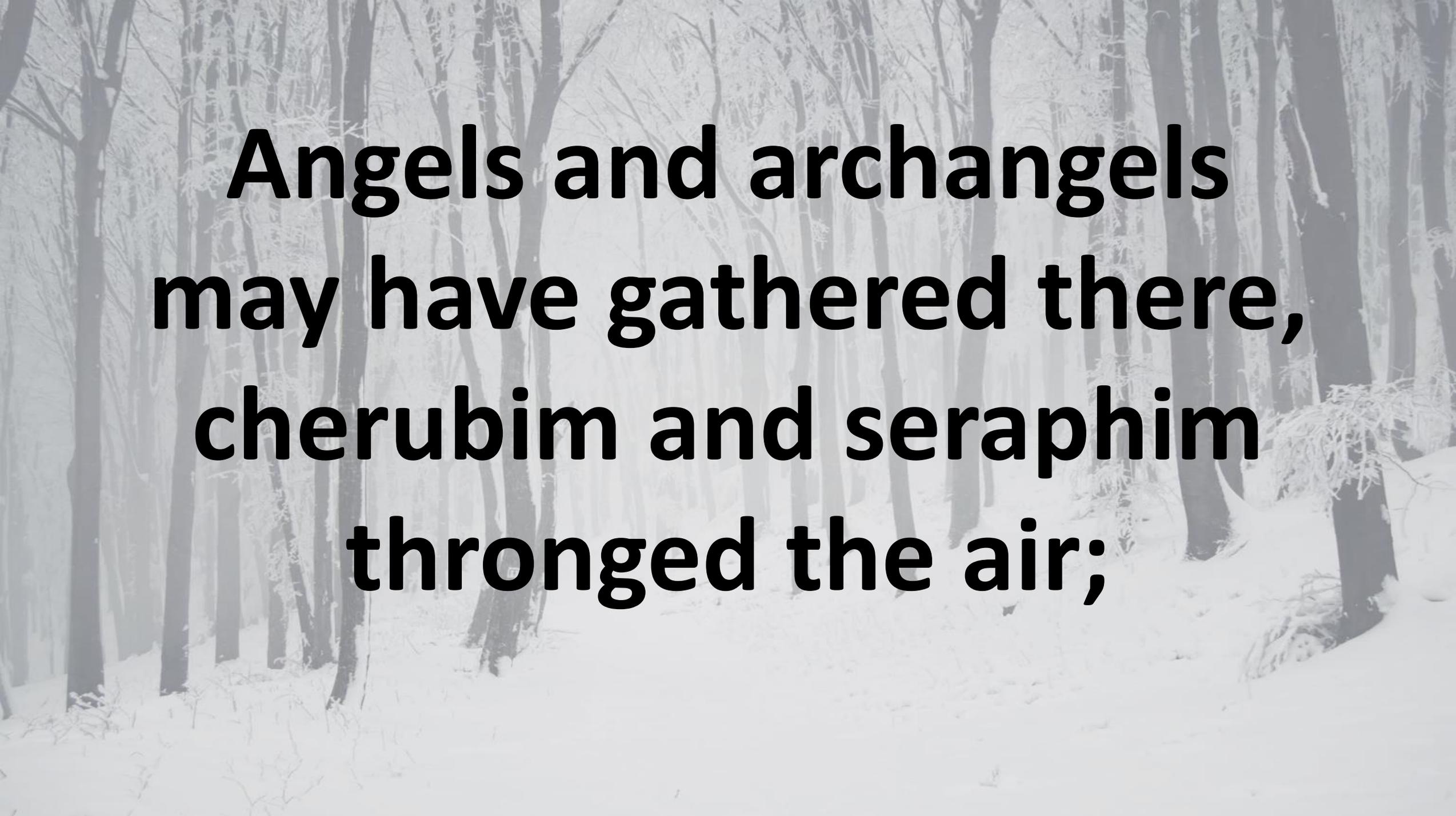
**snow had fallen,
snow on snow,
snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter,
long ago.**



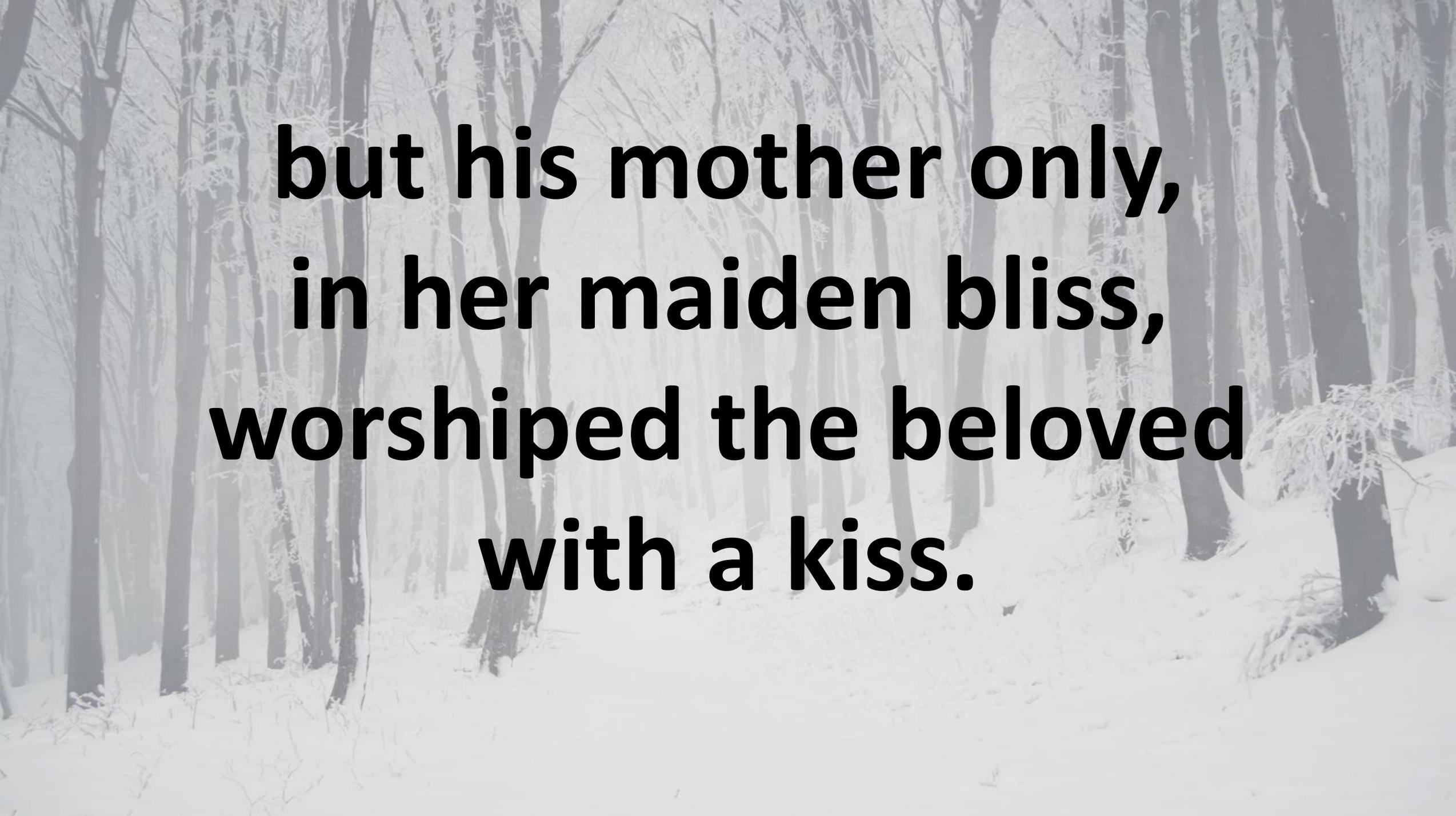
**Our God, heaven cannot hold
him, nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee
away when he comes to reign.**

A serene winter scene of a forest. The ground is covered in a thick layer of snow, and the trees are tall and thin, their branches also dusted with snow. The lighting is soft and diffused, creating a peaceful and quiet atmosphere. The text is overlaid in the center of the image in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

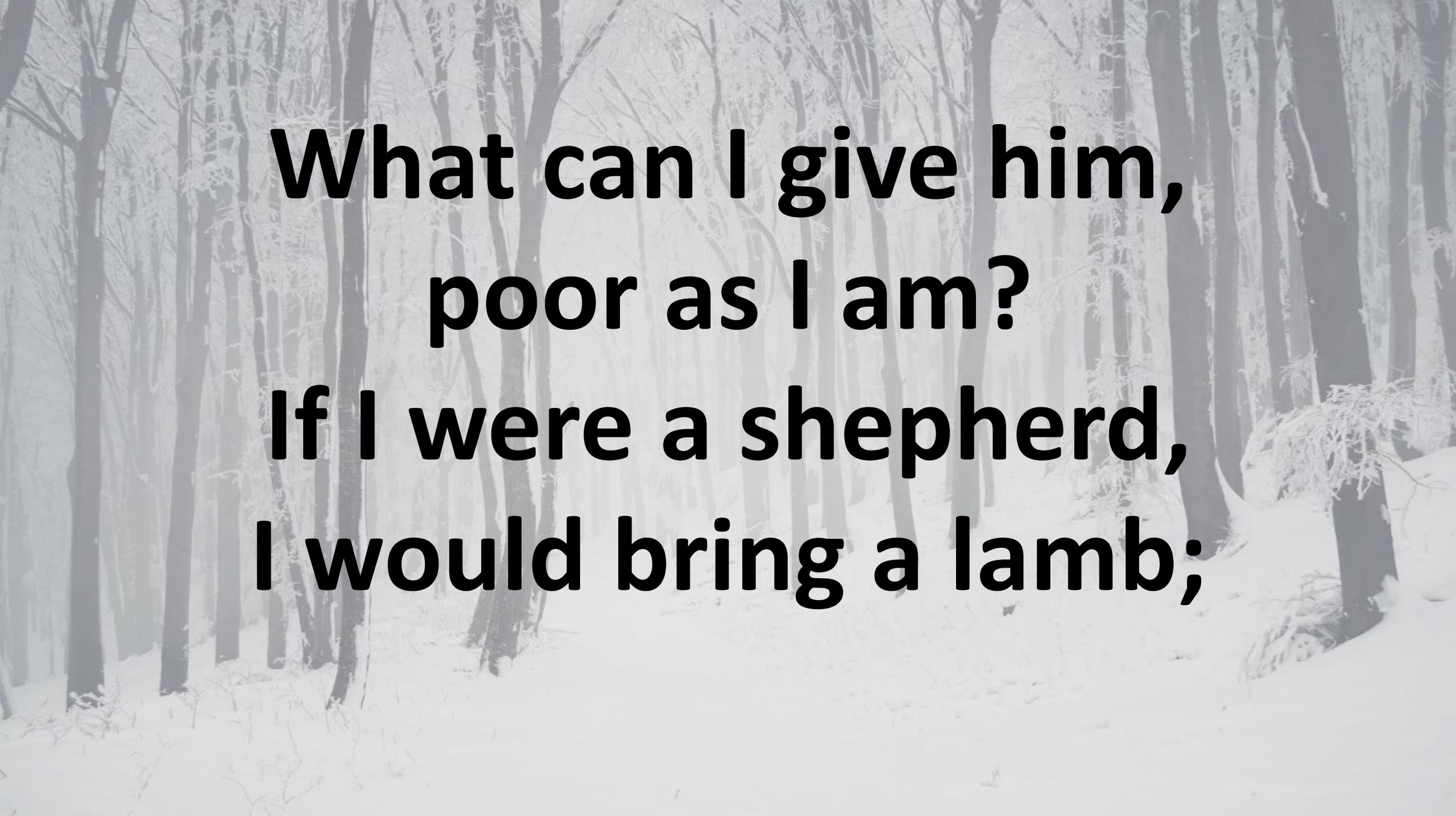
**In the bleak midwinter
a stable place sufficed
the Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.**



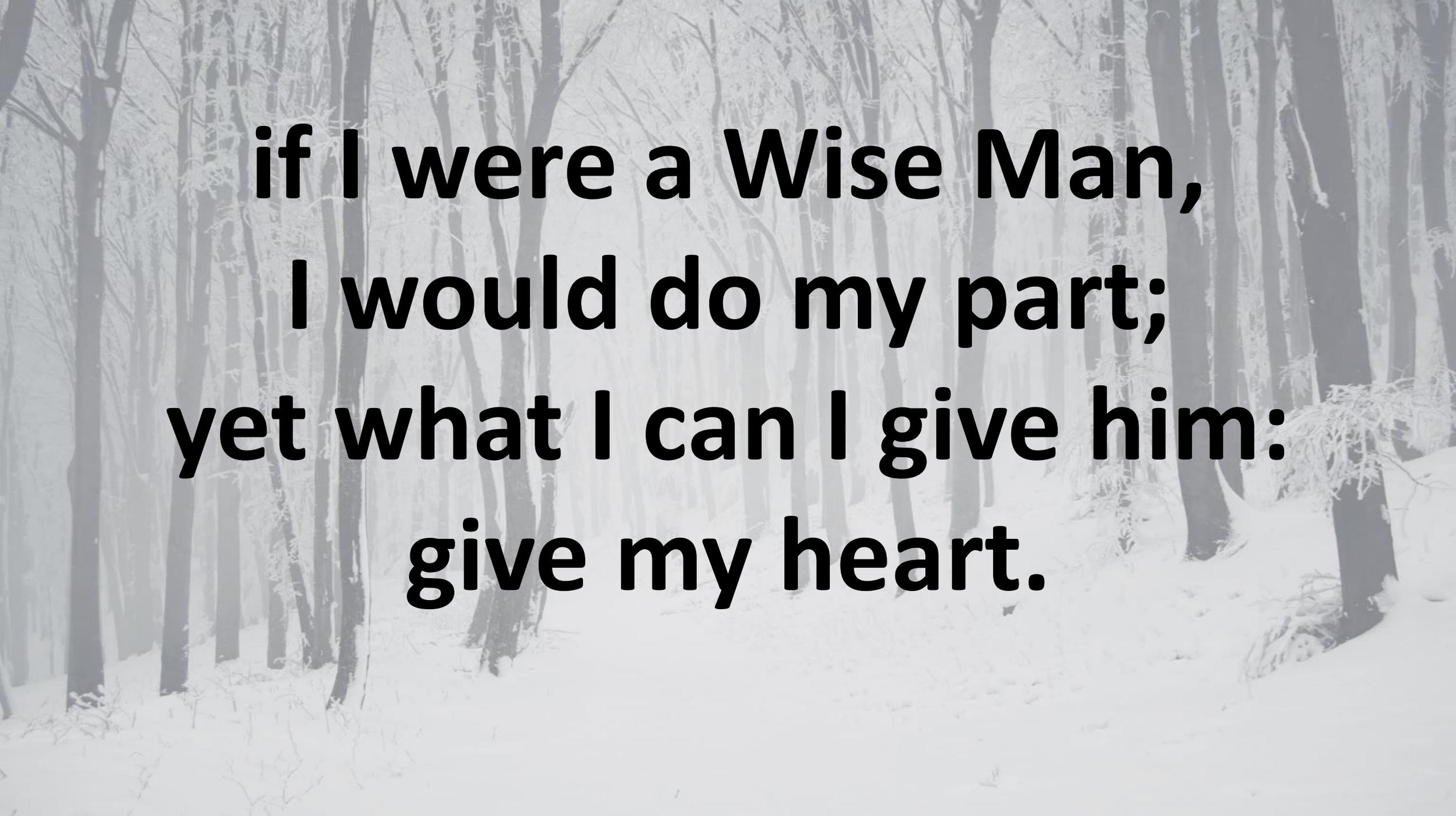
**Angels and archangels
may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim
thronged the air;**



**but his mother only,
in her maiden bliss,
worshiped the beloved
with a kiss.**

A grayscale photograph of a dense forest in winter. The trees are covered in snow, and the ground is a thick blanket of white. The lighting is soft, creating a serene and quiet atmosphere. The text is overlaid in the center of the image in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**What can I give him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb;**



**if I were a Wise Man,
I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him:
give my heart.**

New Testament Reading

Gospel of John 1:1-13

Matthew and Luke describe Jesus' birth in Bethlehem with stories of visits from shepherds and Magi. But John's gospel speaks of Jesus as God's Word for all humanity, as God's Word spoken through this one born into a hurting

world. He also describes Jesus's birth as light in out darkness. "Before the world was created, the world already existed; the Word was with God and was the same as God. From this very beginning the Word was with God.

Through the Word God made all things. Not one thing in all creation was

made without the Word.

The Word contained life and this life brought light to all people.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never overpowered it. The true light that enlightens all people was coming into the world.

And the Word was made flesh and lived among us; and we saw his glory, full of grace and truth."

Today's Message

The Impact of God's Love

Pastor Gary Spraker

HOLY COMMUNION

“DO THIS IN
REMEMBRANCE
OF ME.”



L: We put our trust in Jesus Christ who said: "I am the bread of life."

C: We are fed by the body of Christ and by the Word of God which is our food.

L: We are nourished and sustained by God's life-giving Spirit.

C: We receive Christ's promise to fill our hunger and quench our thirst.

L: Christ gives life to the world through His broken body and spilled blood.

C: We come to Christ's table to receive His gifts with joy.

All: Christ is our living bread!
Thanks be to God!

L: In the same way He took the cup
and said:

All: “Drink this all of you. This is the blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

L: Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

L: Father, in obedience to Your Son Jesus Christ, we celebrate with this bread and this cup, His victory on the cross, lifting our hearts to you in joyful thanksgiving.

L: We praise You for Your whole creation, that through it we may see your glory; and we thank you, that as Jesus Christ, we die to sin and are raised to new life.

**All: Christ has died;
Christ is risen;
Christ will come again!**

L: Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. The bread, which we break, is a sharing in the body of Christ.

L: The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ. By Your Holy Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world. **Amen.**

L: What a precious gift that we do not remain broken and burdened by our sin! Jesus Christ forgives us, renewing us to walk in freedom and power. Thanks be to God.
Amen.

L: On the night he was betrayed,
Jesus took bread, gave thanks to
God, broke it and said:

**All: “Take and eat. This is my
body which is given for you. Do
this in remembrance of Me.”**

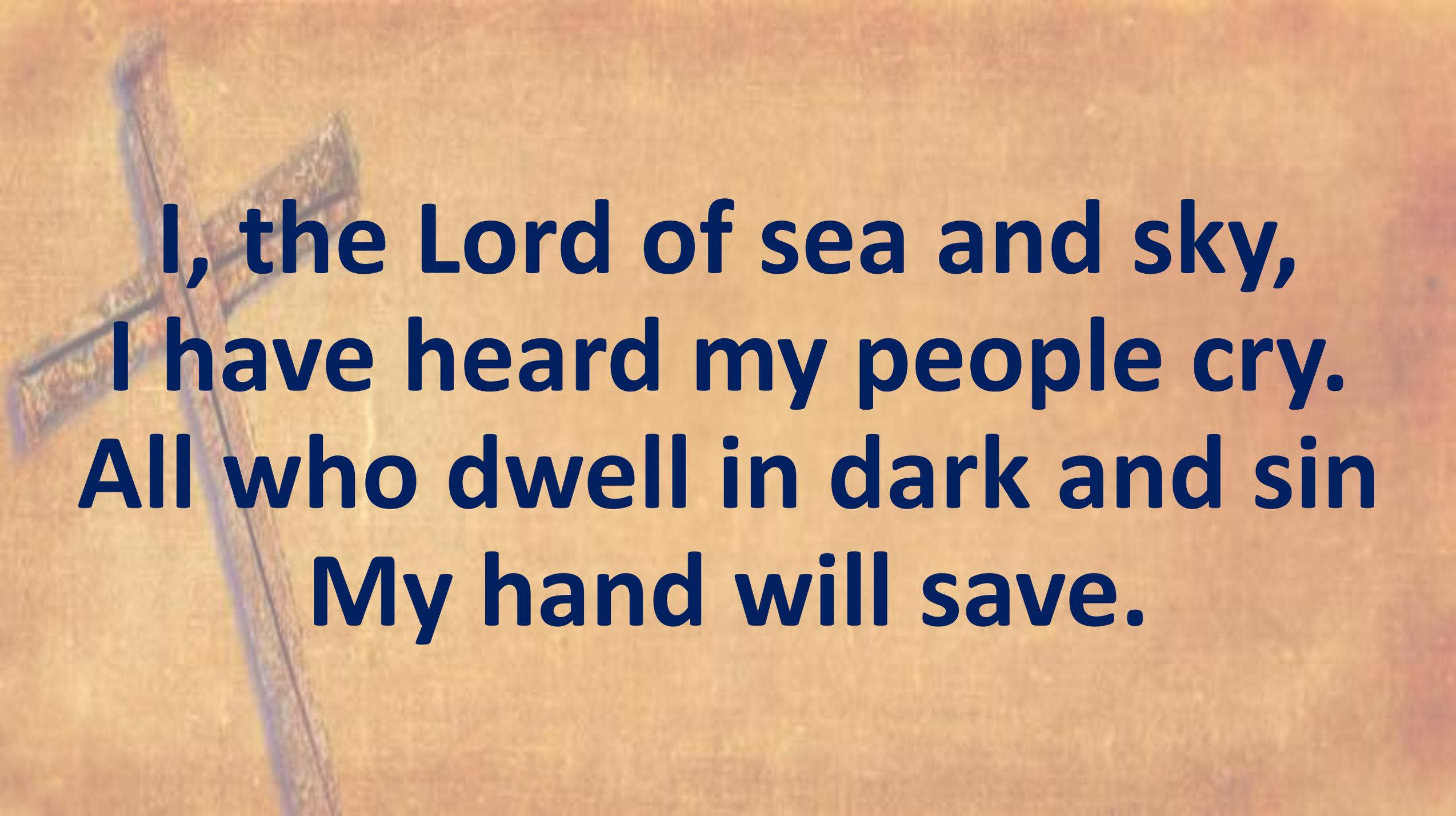


COME TO THE TABLE
& live a new life

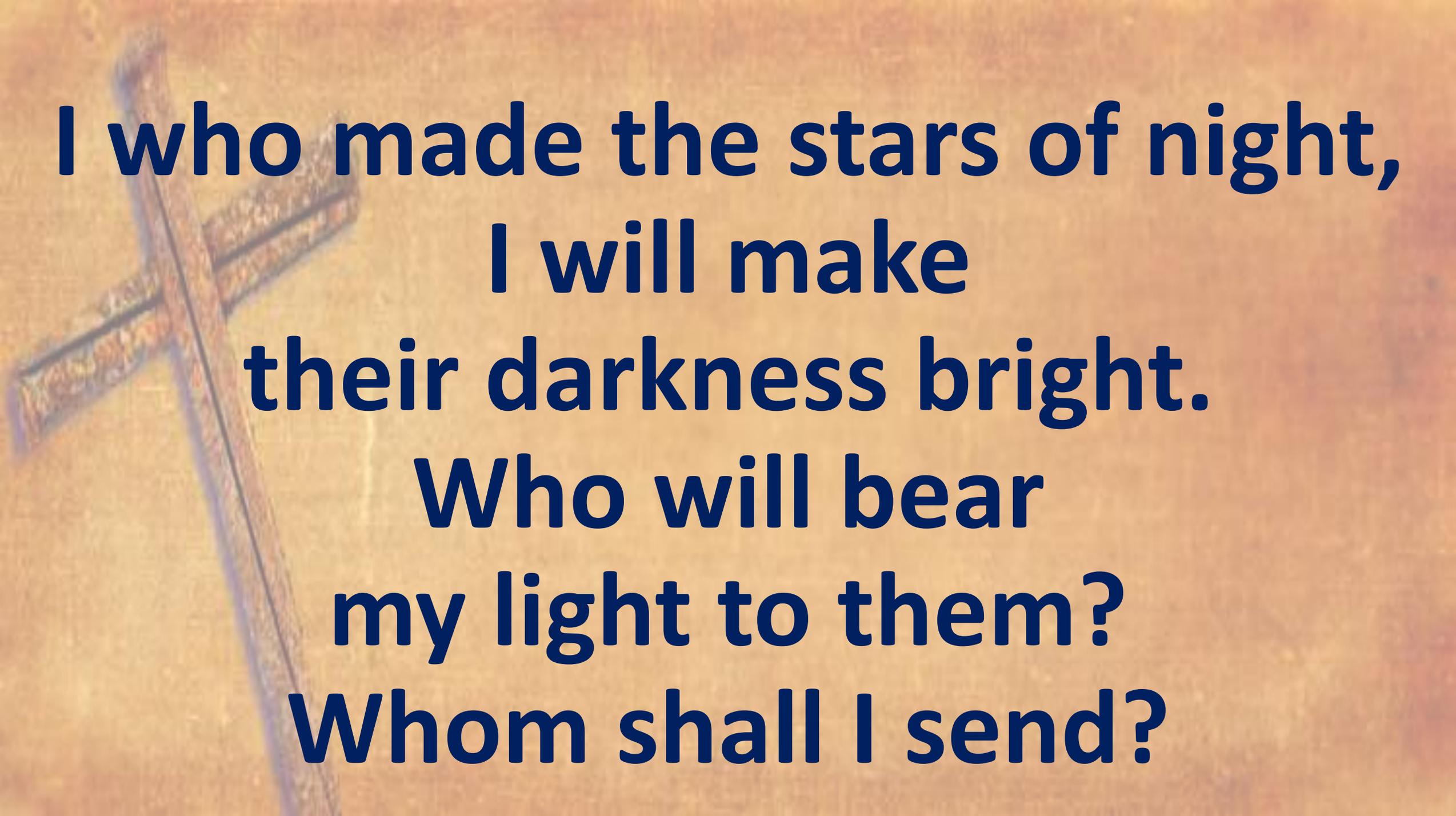
A sunset scene with a starry sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow. The sky is filled with stars. In the foreground, there are silhouettes of palm trees and cypresses. The text "Here I am, Lord!" is written in a decorative font across the middle of the image.

Here I am, Lord!

#593 UMH

A wooden cross is positioned on the left side of the image, set against a textured, light brown background. The cross is made of two weathered wooden beams. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image in a bold, dark blue font.

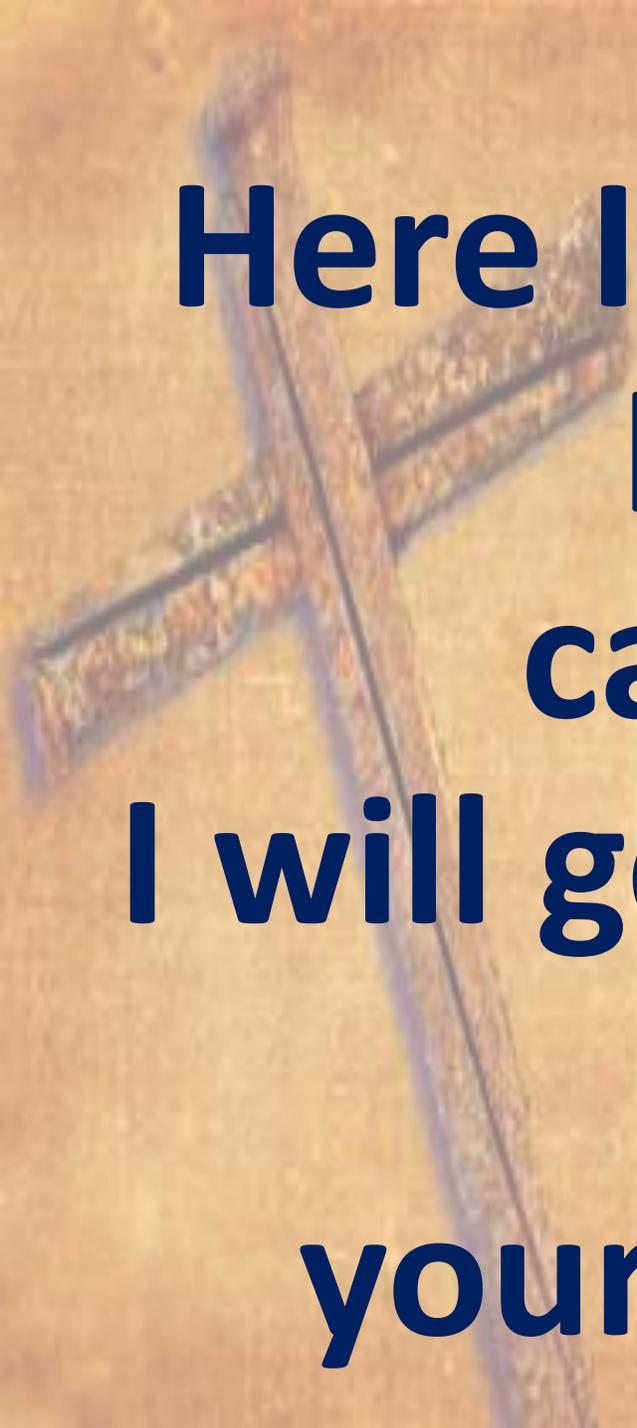
**I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
My hand will save.**

A wooden cross is positioned on the left side of the image, set against a warm, textured background of orange and yellow tones. The cross is made of two weathered wooden beams. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

I who made the stars of night,

**I will make
their darkness bright.**

**Who will bear
my light to them?
Whom shall I send?**

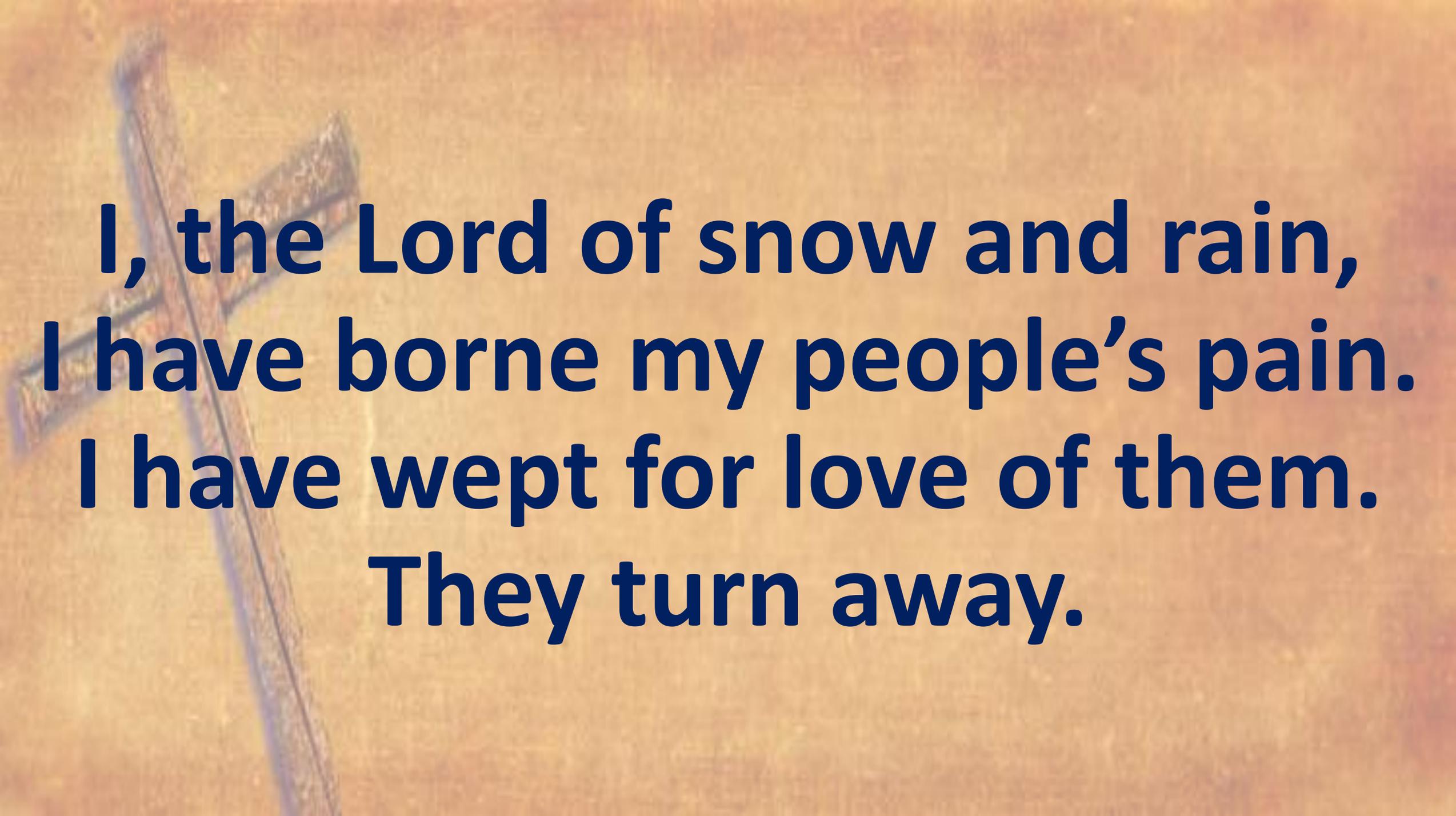


Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

**I have heard You
calling in the night.**

I will go, Lord, if You lead me.

**I will hold
your people in my heart.**

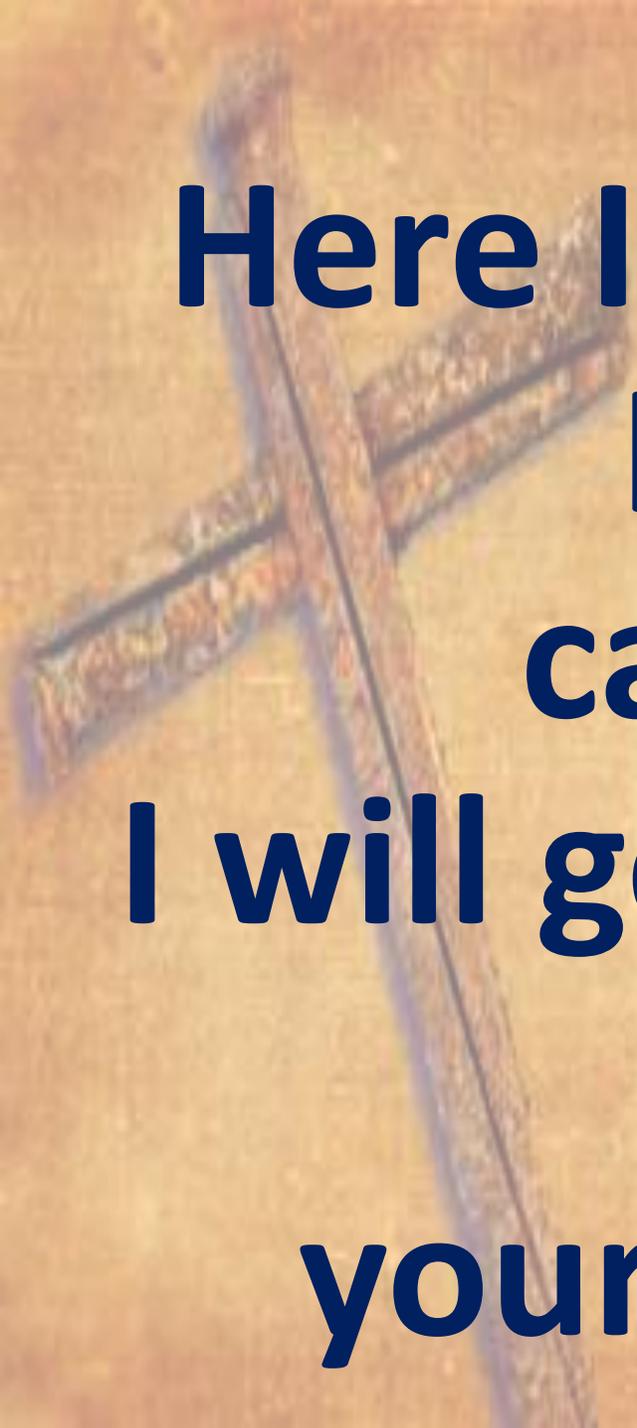
A wooden cross is positioned on the left side of the image, set against a warm, textured background of orange and yellow tones. The cross is made of weathered wood and is slightly out of focus. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image in a bold, dark blue font.

**I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.**



**I will break
their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts
for love alone.**

**I will speak my Word to them.
Whom shall I send?**

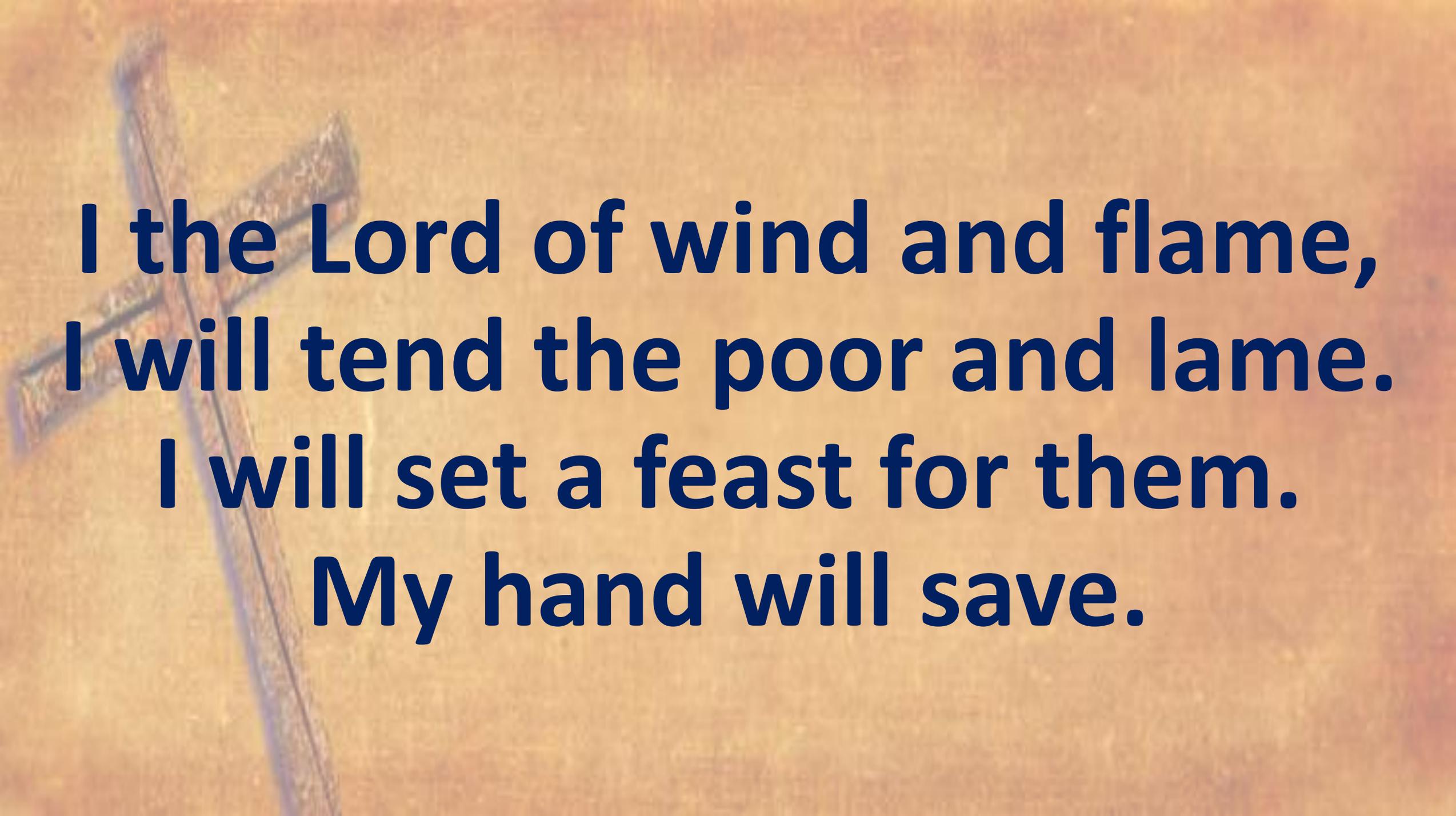


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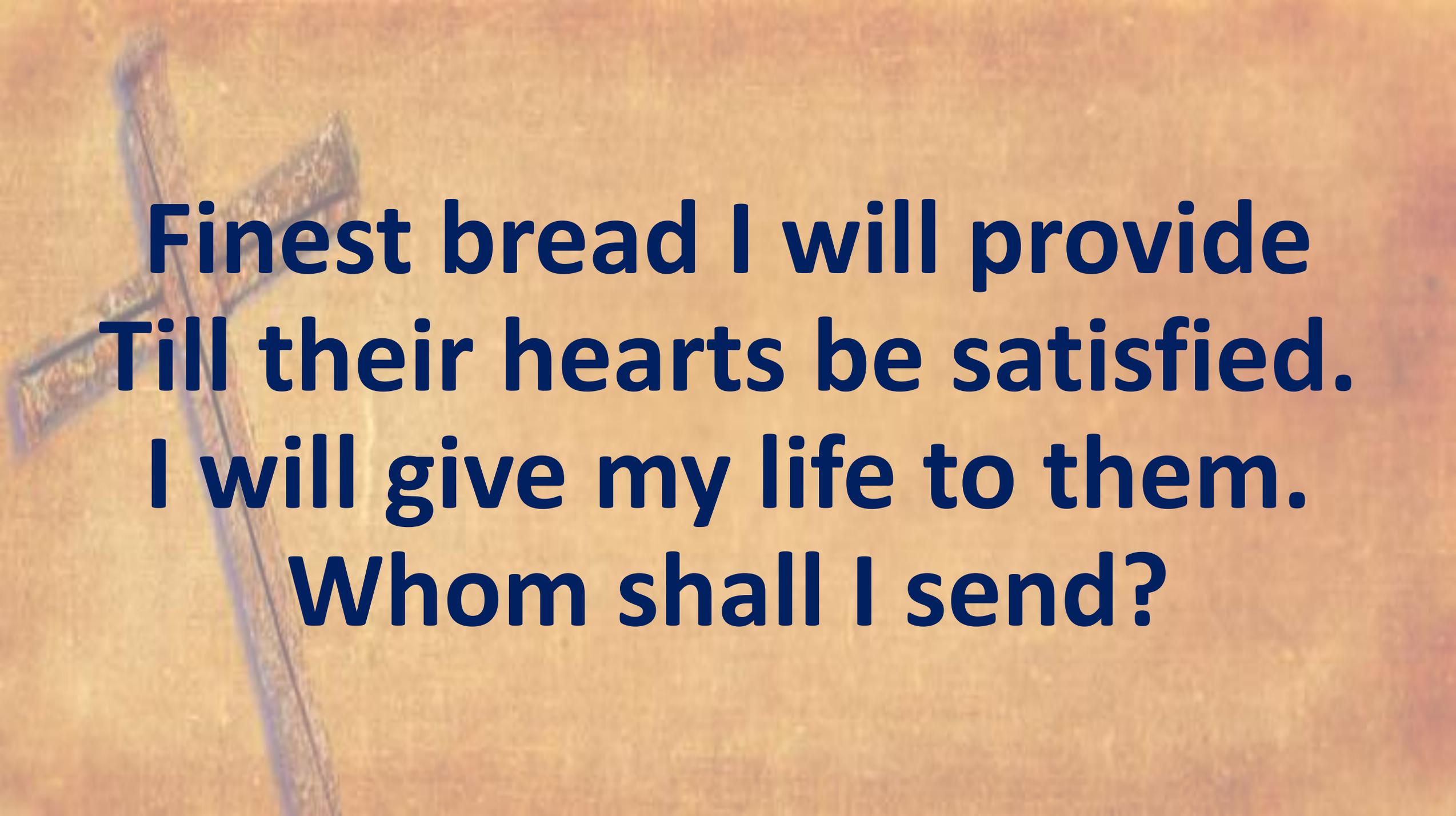
**I have heard You
calling in the night.**

I will go, Lord, if You lead me.

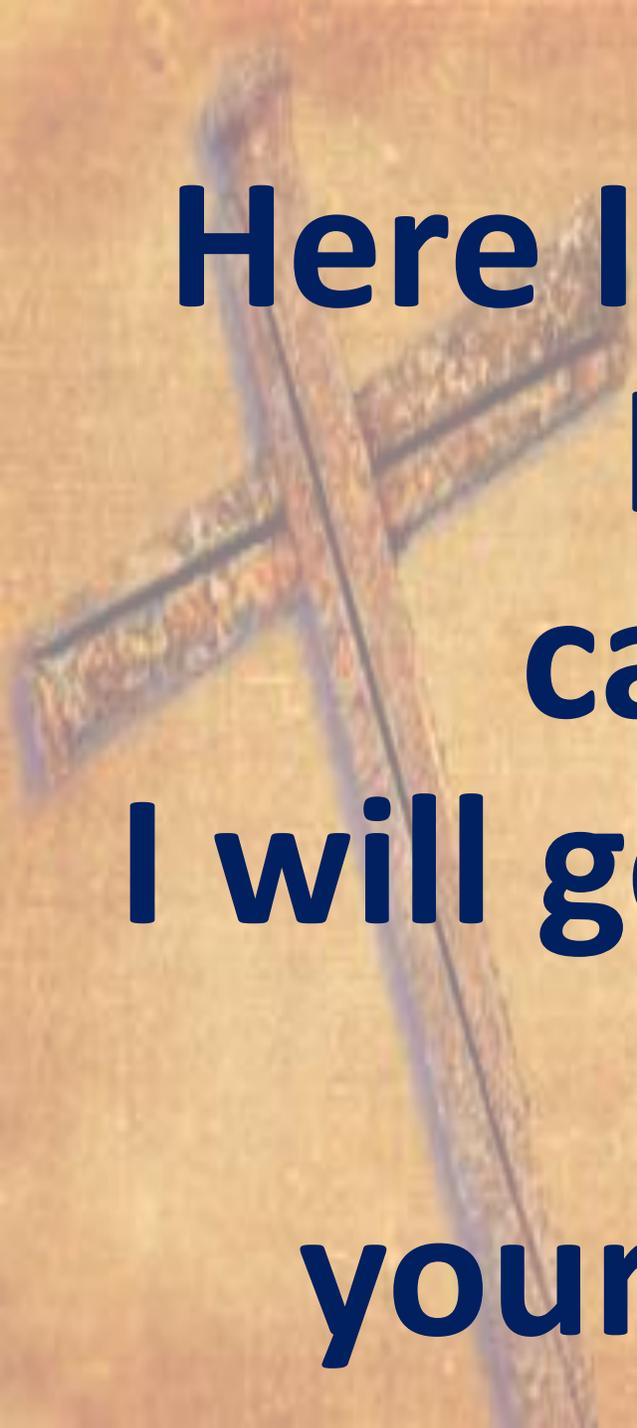
**I will hold
your people in my heart.**

A wooden cross is positioned on the left side of the image, set against a textured, light brown background. The cross is made of two weathered wooden beams. The text is centered and written in a bold, dark blue font.

**I the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.**

A wooden cross is positioned on the left side of the image, set against a textured, light brown background. The cross is made of two weathered wooden beams. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image in a bold, dark blue font.

**Finest bread I will provide
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?**



Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

**I have heard You
calling in the night.**

I will go, Lord, if You lead me.

**I will hold
your people in my heart.**

Benediction (in unison):

**May the road rise up to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and the rains fall soft upon your fields;
and until we meet again,
May you be held in the warmth and
power of God's Arms. Amen.**