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Commentary from Design For Ministry™

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Praise for bounty 15 February 2006

"I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me."

—Psalm 13:6 (NRSV)

These words sound like they are part of a contemporary praise song. Perhaps it is a theme verse for a congregation somewhere that preaches a prosperity gospel—the good news that God wants you to have material prosperity.

But what if you discovered that these words were written as a reflection on suffering?

What if you knew some of the previous verses reprimanded God for forgetting about the Psalmist?

What if before you heard these words of praise to God for the bounty bestowed you heard the words of pain, sorrow, abandonment, sleeplessness and anguish over being at the mercy of one's enemies?

Spend a little more time with these verses and you discover the statement that the Psalmist will sing to the Lord is more an affirmation of

one's ongoing faith than it is a statement of joy.

Middle- and upper-class North American Christians gather with overfed bodies in amply resourced congregations, proclaiming faith with words like those in Psalm 13. Some of those Christians are suffering, and it is a proclamation of their faith to sing to the Lord for his bounty. Most, however, are so immune to real suffering that they cannot imagine the profoundness of singing to the Lord when they are starving and war-torn, when their loved ones are cut down, when they are displaced and their homes razed, when they are systematically starved, or their children are taken from their homes.

May none of us be stricken with this type of suffering. May we all work to bring it to an end where it exists. And may we more fully admire all those who find God's bounty in the midst of darkness.

—mark l. vincent