

Another Chance to Sing!

“Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice:
It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.”

Hamel & Prahalad
Competing for the future

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down,
yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion...
For there they that carried us away captive
Required of us a song;
and they that wasted us required of us mirth,
saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”

Psalms 137

The Annual State of the Church Address delivered at the Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington, DC by the Reverend Dr. H. Beecher Hicks, Jr., Senior Minister, on Sunday, January 31, 1998.

Another Chance to Sing!

To the Reverend clergy, Deacon Lazarus Hines and the Board of Deacons, Trustee Brenda Girton Mitchell and the Board of Trustees, Deaconess Deborah Jones and the Board of Deaconesses, members of the church staff, faithful and devoted leaders of the sixty-three ministries which compose our church life, to you who are the beloved of the Christ of God and to all to whom these greetings might come, I salute you today in the name of Calvary's matchless lamb, even Jesus our Lord.

There is no doubt in my mind that I have been blessed and highly favored by God in more ways than I can imagine. On this day, however, the signature of God's favor is especially keen and is manifest in two meaningful ways. First, I have been favored, now for twenty-one and one half years, to serve as your pastor. I can never merit the grace by which you have tolerated me nor the love that you have showered upon my family and me now for more than two decades of time. Second, I have been favored to stand in this pulpit on this annual day for the final time in the twentieth century.

When last Metropolitan saw the shifting of the centuries, Robert Johnson, the builder of the original Victorian church, stood on the soil on which I now stand.

When last Metropolitan saw the shifting of the centuries, the church was alive, growing, and a wonder to those who did not believe that the sons and daughters of former slaves could build a cathedral so grand and so tall. Now one hundred years later I have not only come to declare that the state of the church is sound, I have come to declare with the saints of old:

***“All hail the power of Jesus’ name,
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”***

We cannot come to this hour without an appreciation of its historic merit. Day by day, we watch the sands of the hour glass move from one era of time to the next. Those who speak the word “millennium” do so in terms of the end of the year, the end of the decade, the end of the century and of the millennium, or the thousand years. Depending upon one's personal vantage point one is either able to look ahead with vision and hope or with dread and despair.

For many, the coming of this new century occasions discussion of the coming of the apocalypse. We are drawn to the romantic albeit enigmatic notion of God crashing into our world, saving the elect and destroying God's enemies.

Theologian Martin E. Marty opines that some Christians believe that when the apocalypse shall come Christ will reign upon the earth for a thousand years or that there will be some future catastrophe caused by nature or humans that will bring to us a sure and certain end.

On the other hand I, for one, believe that the same God that is in charge of *this century* is the same God that will be in charge of the *next century*. I believe that the God that saw our forebears through is the same God that is able to see us through. I believe that the same God that brought us through “*many dangers*” is the same God that can take us through “*toils and snares.*” You can call me “old fashioned” if you want to but I believe that

***“All things work together for good
to them that love God, to them who are
the called according to his purpose.”***

■ -- GRATITUDE --

As I come to address the state of the church, this is a moment to express my gratitude to so many who have done so much to bring Metropolitan to this hour of its strength. Over the years, my relationship with the Official Board has deepened as it has matured. The passage of these years has brought about a mutual love and respect. Now more than any year in my ministry I feel the love, the support and the strength of the Official Board and the Official Family. For each of you I offer my prayer of thanksgiving, as did the Apostle Paul, for our partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now.

The Leadership of our Deacon Board has been entrusted to Deacon Lazarus Hines. Along with John Davis, Harry Thompson and Georgia Whitted, they have made a team that has been a reflection of the rare essence of servant leadership. As they have served the church well during their tenure I look forward to the work which will be initiated by Deacon Donald Hines, newly appointed Chair of the Board who, along with Deacons Leonard Pinkney, Virgie Jones and John Davis will continue and strengthen the legacy of fine work which marks our diaconate.

The Board of Deaconesses continues to gain our appreciation for its loyal service and diligence to duty. Our Church Clerk, Ms. Sharlynn Bobo, is unequalled in the application of her skills to the performance of her responsibilities. The Trustee Board, under the skilled guidance of Minister Brenda Girton Mitchell, has distinguished itself by its loyalty and commitment to its several responsibilities. They have taken seriously their charge to safeguard the fiscal and physical affairs of the church. By their labor they have gained our respect; by their competence they have earned our trust.

Reverends Ivan Hicks, Cheryl Price Clemetson, Frank Gibson, Carolyn Francis form a ministry team of special talents and gifts. Together they have brought to us renewed faithfulness in our stewardship, a genuine thirst for biblical knowledge, a youth ministry that is second to none, and a counseling ministry composed of “wonderful counselors.” I am grateful to each of them for their tireless and often thankless work as supporters of this ministry.

And you, Metropolitan --- you have humbled me by your support and by your love. Over the past year and a half I have been engaged in academic studies at the George Washington University. There have been many things I could not do, many meetings missed, places I could not go and people I could not see. But you have been faithful. And just last week they measured me for a new cap and gown – graduation is only a moment away.

Through it all, our congregation continues to grow numerically. The church, financially, is in a position of strength. Our ministries continue to grow in purpose. As a consequence of our most recent organizational summit, brilliantly led by Mrs. Sabrina Vaughns, President of the Council of Ministries, there is a new spirit of collaboration and collective strength among the ministries of our church. In every sense of the word, we are a Christian family and I am honored and blessed to serve as your Pastor.

■ -- CHIEF OF STAFF --

In recent days our administrative operation has been strengthened by the addition of the Reverend Gloria E. Miller who comes to fill the position of Chief of Staff. While the position of Chief of Staff is new in the Metropolitan organizational flow, the concept is a growing trend, especially among larger churches. The congregation should be clear, however, regarding this position. The coming of a Chief of Staff in no way minimizes the work already being achieved by our ministerial or administrative staff. It is an acknowledgement of the importance of the “gift of administration.”

Although the Senior Minister retains the authority of the office, the Chief of Staff has been given management and supervisory responsibility over the administrative, programmatic and organizational life of the church. The Chief of Staff is the primary assistant to the Senior Minister for ministerial affairs. Through the Chief of Staff Metropolitan intentionally pursues a higher level of professionalism, quality church management and congregational support. Our staff, our ministers and our ministry leaders will benefit from consistent support, both spiritually and organizationally.

In the Reverend Gloria E. Miller, Metropolitan is blessed to receive a minister of considerable church, management and community experience. Please help me to welcome her to this new challenge of ministry and service.

■ -- staff support –

There are many persons who are a part of our administrative and service team who have gained your appreciation as well as my own. Permit me to call them by name: Cheryl Taylor, Buffy Butler, Carol Minick, Andrea Kittrell, Patsy Corumia, Kathy and Michael House, Kim Spriggs and Evelyn Snipes.

What superlatives shall I use to describe the ministry of music in our church? Rev. Nolan Williams, Richard Smallwood, Greg Grainger, Darryl Hunt, Vernon Love, Frances Wood, Janel Merritt, Chris Suggs, J. T. Brown, Dion Clay, all under the skillful baton of Mr. Thomas Dixon Tyler, bring music to our souls Sunday after Sunday in ways that can be imitated but never duplicated. Tony Kittrell and the members of the Audio/visual Ministry are faithful to our need for sound and video and we are grateful to each of them.

If it is true that an army moves on its stomach, then Dottie Howard, Freddie Underwood, Hazel Page, and Eleanor Williams are Generals in God's army. Every Sunday and all through the week they provide for our gastronomic needs and we are grateful.

Our facilities environment is skillfully maintained by six hard working gentlemen: Harry Clark, James Johnson, Curtis Mills, Lawrence Taylor, Frederick Williams, and Jacob Williams. Not to be forgotten are our church van drivers: James Burrell, Diana Canty, James Johnson, Nadine Johnson, C. Bret Matthews. Our thanks to each of them for what is often a thankless job.

■ -- CHURCH GROWTH –

The names and the persons are significant for they represent our growth. In 1977, Metropolitan had 3 full time employees including the Pastor. Today there are 23 full time and 30 part time employees who are here to serve your needs.

In 1977, Metropolitan had a budget of \$212,000 per year. Today the budget is \$4.3 million dollars.

In 1977 our church membership was approximately 2,000. Today our membership exceeds 6,000. In 1998, 539 persons united with our congregation.

Over the last five years our tithes have grown from \$1.3 million in 1993 to a projected \$2.0 million in the current fiscal year. We are, indeed, a tithing church. In the last five years, by tithing the tithe, our congregation has assisted other churches and non-profit agencies throughout our city and our nation by gifts in excess of \$1,000,000. We are a tithing church. Over the last five years we have seen our long-term debt (mortgage) decrease from over \$4.1 million dollars to less than \$2.5 million dollars in 1998. While our current mortgage debt is **\$2,505,714** and must be retired, we are meeting our monthly obligations in a timely manner and are moving toward the eradication of our debt according to our plans. Somebody ought to say, "Hallelujah!"

And yet there are still other reasons for praise. Our church has grown both internally and externally. Over the past years we have witnessed the creation of independent corporations that are designed to give expression to the church mission and further the cause of the kingdom. Among them are:

Metropolitan Delta Adult Literacy Program, now under the leadership of Mrs. Elizabeth Hicks. You should know that the literacy program not only teaches adults to read, it supports a "Free Your Mind" family literacy program (involving 62 head-start families) which includes a basic literacy and "English as a Second Language" literacy program. It also involves a G.E.D. and G.E.D. job training program which includes a child development assistance program and a computer literacy / office assistants training course. Through the adult basic education Program, approximately 100 tutors have been matched with students. I think it is significant that 40 students are enrolled in our GED program and 10 students have received their high school equivalency diploma here at Metropolitan.

THE IAMA INSTITUTE FOR HEALING AND RESTORATION, INC., is an outgrowth of our counseling ministry. With the sensitive guiding hand of Minister Carolyn Francis, our counseling ministry has become an invaluable extension of our ministry and our service both to the congregation and the community. You should know that our counseling ministry involves more than 50 hours per week (2,500 hours per year) in therapeutic counseling. Eleven Christian counselors, who are members of our congregation, form a multi-disciplinary team. Among them are social workers, licensed marriage and family therapists, certified

addiction therapists, psychologists, and a psychiatric social worker. The counseling ministry is structuring its emphasis away from symptom resolution toward prevention. It is in this way that we care about you at metropolitan.

The most recent outgrowth of our ministry has been the creation of the **Metropolitan Community Development Corporation**. This newest corporation was given birth just two weeks ago with the first meeting of its board of directors. I am delighted that my son, the Reverend Ivan Hicks, has taken on responsibility for the birth and growth of this venture into housing and economic development for our church and that he will serve as executive director for the corporation. We must be increasingly vigilant to insure that our church remains on the cutting edge of vital ministry. Our mission must be broad enough to engage the spectrum of human need within and beyond our membership. Ours will be an intentional movement toward economic empowerment of our church and our people. It is in this way that we care for our community at Metropolitan.

The fourth corporation to be created is **the Metropolitan day school, Inc.** The Day School, coming now to the close of its first year of operation, is alive and well. Principal Irene Woodard, her faculty and staff, have worked tirelessly to insure that the Metropolitan Day School is and will be the finest opportunity for educational excellence in our community. We anticipate that in September we will in fact open our doors in the renovated facility at Randolph and 13th Streets, N.E., and that we will accommodate students in our second year from pre-kindergarten to the 6th grade.

The Day School is going to live. There are several things which you must do, however, to insure its continued growth. First, Metropolitan, you must bring your children. Fully 90% of the current student body is composed of children whose parents are not members of Metropolitan. We must not only invest in our own, we must participate in this program by bringing our own children and encouraging our families to share in it as well. Second, For those of you who are able, become a donor of scholarship assistance for our students. It is has become clear in our first year that student aid is a critical necessity. We will soon need to offer some form of transportation and more sophisticated food service. We can make these additions but only with your help.

Finally, Metropolitan must see the Day School as a primary objective of its ministry support. If the Day School is to survive it will need to be included as a major portion of our church budget on a continuing basis. As the church budget for FY2000 is designed, I urge the Budget and Finance Committee and the Official Board to make substantial increases in the allotment of both capital and programmatic resources for the Day School. We must insure that our teachers are well paid and that they have the finest resources available for their teaching.

I am convinced that our future as a people is dependent on the investment we make in our children. Neither the government nor any other entity should do this

for us – we must do this for ourselves. If our grandparents could create Morehouse, and Spelman, and Howard, surely we can create an academically disciplined elementary school that is economically attainable, culturally competent and biblically based. We can do no less. It is in this way that we shall care for our children at Metropolitan.

■ -- IMAGINING THE FUTURE --

Our attention must now turn to ideas of the future. What I say to you now may be the most serious thing I have suggested to this church administratively in the last decade. There are concerns on our horizon. There are issues that must be faced. There are questions that must be asked and answers that must be given. Quite literally, in this new millennium, our future is at hand.

In their book, *Competing for the Future*, Hamel and Prahalad suggest that our first substantial challenge is “to plot a course through an increasingly inconstant environment where experience is rapidly devalued and familiar landmarks no longer serve as guideposts.” Our experience as a religious institution spans 134 years. There is no question that metropolitan is a landmark within this community. Neither experience nor landmark, however, may be enough in the days before us. This is the reality:

- ✓ The properties we own on 13th street have been designated as part of the greater 14th street historic preservation district. Our legal appeal challenging the designation failed. We are now in the unenviable position of seeking approvals from various governmental and community agencies before we alter these properties in any material way. Any movement toward alteration of the existing church building or expansion of Monument Hall toward 13th Street will not only be expensive, it will in all likelihood, attract vigorous opposition both from residents and community associations.
- ✓ There is now a serious movement afoot to alter the usage of the Garrison Elementary School grounds. While the church has an agreement with D. C. Public Schools for our parking, the lease will soon expire. Every Sunday we park approximately 300 cars on the school lot. Under a new plan the available parking will be reduced to 50 to 75 spaces. I have no quarrel with anything that will improve the lives and the educational opportunities of children. There is no question, however, that **any** loss of parking facility will have a serious impact on the church and its services.

- ✓ Properties owned on the south side of R Street, immediately facing the church, are not sufficient to provide significant parking relief. Any building constructed on this land will not only impact the residents currently dwelling there but will be impacted by the limited number of parking spaces available. How this property is used is of critical importance to our community and to our viability within it.
- ✓ Our church has now reached maximum usage capacity. The building is literally open seven days a week, 24 hours a day. With 63 ministries and countless Bible classes, the competition for space is critical. Every room in this building serves multiple purposes. There are no rooms specifically and exclusively dedicated to Christian education. None of the spaces in the building are adequate for their use. The counseling ministry is involved in counseling literally between the pews and in the bathrooms. Choirs do not have a room large enough in which to rehearse or even a closet large enough to handle their robes. The wear and tear on our pews has reached the point that all of them need to be repaired, reinforced, re-padded or replaced. Most of the worship services are at full or near full capacity. On any given evening our church facility is at near 100% use.
- ✓ Consider also that over 50% of our congregation no longer live in Washington, DC. Those who live in suburban areas pass by many churches on the way to Metropolitan. They pass by churches with modern facilities, abundant and safe parking, and ministries that are equally as vibrant as our own. Upon arrival here they are met with crowded or non-existent parking, church facilities that are crowded and insufficient, a worship that is usually overcrowded before they can find a seat and a balcony that sways like a swing in June every time the Holy Spirit comes to church!

For those of us who struggled to build this building and journeyed through a storm to do so, it is difficult to hear but the truth is upon us: **This building no longer serves our congregational needs.**

How shall we respond to so great a challenge? We must recognize, at the outset, that this is not a future concern. The present and the future are not neatly separated by time and space. The future is now.

I have given great thought to this issue. For many years I have spoken to you of vision, specifically of God's vision for our church. I have spoken to you of vastly expanded ministries – of ministries that meet the needs of both congregation and community. I suspect I spoke of needs that many of us did not know we had. I spoke of a vision that many of us could not see. Now, however, the needs have become so apparent that the vision has become real. The year 2000 is now. Where do we go from here?

I have come today to prayerfully, yet boldly, suggest that Metropolitan must face seriously its place in this community. I believe that God has great work for us to achieve but we must ask ourselves if R Street is the place where God's vision can be realized?

Specifically, what are our options? I believe there are many:

First, we may choose to remain where we are. The challenges we face, though difficult, are not insurmountable. Creative thought, combined with prayer, can help us see a different reality.

Second, it may be possible to remain where we are and intentionally create suburban satellite churches that would assist in removing the constant drain on our current facility. In other words, instead of one church, several churches organically connected to achieve different purposes.

A **third** option is to remain where we are with suburban centers of Christian education, recreation, choir rehearsals and fellowship, leaving R Street primarily for worship. These might be "church work centers" while the congregation returns primarily on Sunday for worship.

A **fourth** option is to move our church to another location while we retain a portion of this land to construct a center for urban ministry in order to continue our historic presence as a spiritual landmark in Washington, DC.

A **final** option is to sell our current properties and move to a new location entirely. This option envisions relocation of the church to a chosen site where land to build and opportunity for expansion would be sufficient.

The result of any one or a combination of these options will be, in truth, a new metropolitan for a new millennium.

There may be other options still. I remain fluid and open to the way God would lead us and to the will of the congregation in this matter. More to the point, I remain open to the will of God in terms of my own involvement in this process. Moses led the children of Israel to the Promised Land. God, however, sent Joshua and Caleb to lead them over Jordan into it. It may be that I must say as did the Apostle Paul: *"I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."* I may never see this vision come to its fruition. God assigns such honor not to David but to Solomon.

Without question I have a vision of what God is calling us to be and do. My position, however, is "shepherd." Metropolitan is God's church. It is our church and not my church. I can lead you but I must not compel you. As my grandfather William Hicks, often said, "you can draw but you cannot drive." At any case, I have no intention of preaching through another storm.

I am only convinced, however, that we cannot afford the luxury of long and protracted debate over this issue. We must rethink the whole idea of “church.” We must rethink how and where Metropolitan can fulfill its part in the coming of the kingdom of God. We must come to grips with the urgency of the Vision and move to make it a present reality.

Within the next few weeks I will begin a process that will engage the congregation in considering these and other related issues systematically, prayerfully, and with a view toward the intentional inclusion of all of our church family in the conversation. Church officers, ministry leaders, and those who sit unnoticed under the balcony on the right hand side by the wall will have equal opportunity to express their feelings, their hopes and their dreams. We will, with Christian maturity, consider the issue of location and ministry options for our church. It is my intention to return to the congregation in our **annual meeting on May 21, 1999** with a full report of our deliberations and with the hope that at that time the congregation will give to me and the official board direction for this new venture for God. We must constantly bear in mind that our task is not to predict the future. Our task is to remain open to the leading of God who is the author of the future. Our task is to remain aware that God’s getting ready to do something. Our task is to remain aware that *“he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* Philippians 1:6

Our task is to remember that:

*“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,
neither have entered into the heart of man,
the things which God hath prepared
for them that love him.”*

I Corinthians 2:9

ANOTHER CHANCE TO SING!

The 137th Psalm of David captures the essence of how God acts in the affairs of men and nations. Israel, the chosen and elect people of God, found themselves exiles and strangers in a foreign land. It all happened in a moment’s time. At one moment the nation was vibrant and alive, a people of prosperity and hope. But in the twinkling of an eye, a free people became a bonded people. In a moment, their garments of gladness were replaced by the sackcloth of their

shame. In a moment, their dancing feet of joy had become the sagging shoulders of sadness.

You know this story better than I but permit me to remind you that the Bible says that the children of Israel were defeated in battle and demoralized by the plunder and ravage of war. There they were on the banks of the Babylon when the oppressor said to them: "Sing us one of Zion's songs." To which someone replied, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

It will not take protracted analysis to tell you that in the moment of their greatest trial, in the moment of their sternest challenge, in the darkness of her bleakest hour, Israel refused to sing.

Israel refused to sing because she could never forget what used to be. For Israel, religion had been reduced to a recital of what used to be. Israel's word was: ***"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."*** That's a recital of what used to be.

Hear me, now. The only thing Israel could remember was the temple at Jerusalem. She remembered the splendor of the temple situated on Mount Moriah. She remembered the grandeur of its architecture. She remembered the art which adorned her walls, the candles and the altars, the holy of holies, the incense and the sacrifice. Israel remembered what used to be. She could remember what God had done but was not available to envision what God could do. She was acquainted with the God of the past but had never been introduced to the God of the future.

The danger for the church then, and now, is that it is caught in a recital of what used to be. Nobody likes to recall what used to be any more than I do, but I cannot live in yesterday, I must be fully present in my today in order to be prepared for my tomorrow. Whatever you do, don't hold the church in yesterday.

- Yesterday you could see sunlight through the floorboards but today you rub your feet on carpeted floors.
- Yesterday you sat on slats but today you sit on padded pews.
- Yesterday you came to church on two feet and ten toes, but today you came in your brand new BMW.
- Yesterday you had to make music with your feet and set time with your hands but today you've got a synthesizer, Hammond organ, bass guitar, a Steinway Baby Grand and a three rank pipe organ with a trompette en chemade to bless your soul!

I keep on telling you, Israel refused to sing. Israel refused to sing because she could never forget what used to be. More important, however, was the fact that **Israel thought the issue was Israel.** Yes, it is true that Israel was the

instrument of challenge but the issue was not what Israel could do but what God could do.

May I tell you today that whenever you are faced by an assault by Satan, the issue is never about you. Satan knows you can't do anything. Satan knows you don't have any power. Satan understands the limitations of your humanity. The issue is not you but God.

Now that the children of Israel are in bondage the issue is what can God do.

Now that it appears that the people of God have been placed in an uncomfortable and compromised position, the question is what can God do?

Now that the children of Israel have been removed from their religious "comfort zone" and they can no longer rely on the security of a physical place in which to worship, what can God do?

Now that the children of God are land-locked, unable to move forward or back, more people than they have places for people to be, unable to grow, caught, caged and confined, what can God do?

Well, there are two answers to this question and I will then take my seat:

First, **never give up on God**. I don't know what your Bible says but my Bible says never give up on God.

If you are standing at the edge of the Red Sea with water up to your neck, never give up on God.

If you are standing like David before the Goliaths of this world with nothing in your hand but one sling-shot and five smooth stones, never give up on God.

If you are standing in your kitchen like the widow of Zaraphath with only a handful of meal, a little cruse of oil, and two sticks to make fire, never give up on God.

If, like Jonah, you find yourself in the belly of a great fish sitting on the floor of the ocean, even then, never give up on God.

If, like Daniel, you are standing in a den of lions, never give up on God.

If, like those three Hebrew boys, you are standing in a fiery furnace and your furnace has been heated seven times hotter than before, there's a fourth man coming so never give up on God.

If you have been to the doctors and the doctors have turned their heads and walked away, never give up on God.

If you are not sure where tomorrow's meal is coming from and you don't have a dime to your name, I rise to tell you one more time, never give up on God!

And, the second response to my question is: **don't forget that what we are faced with is another chance to sing!**

When, like the children of Israel, it appears that our options are limited and our opportunities are few, it's just another chance to sing.

When the world wants to pen you in and shut you out, don't you worry, it's just another chance to sing.

When enemies have gathered around to tell you what you cannot do, and where you cannot go, and how you cannot grow, I keep on telling you, it's just another chance to sing.

Never miss your opportunity to sing. There on the banks of the Babylon they sat with their heads in their hands. I see them there as tears began to stream down their faces. I see them there as their countenance changes. I see them there as they hang their robes on hooks of hopelessness and file their anthems in the folders of futility. That's the time they should have sung.

I don't care how desperate your circumstance, anytime you have an opportunity to tell the world what God can do, you ought to sing.

Anytime you have an opportunity to tell the world about God's amazing grace, you ought to sing. Sing anyhow.

It makes no difference if you are standing on the mountaintop or sinking in some valley low; you ought to sing anyhow.

If you are standing in the sunshine of victory or soaking in the downpour of defeat, you ought to sing anyhow.

If a smile is on your face or all you can do is wipe the tears from your eyes, you ought to sing anyhow.

I don't know about you but I cannot make it without a song.
Without a song, the burden will be too much to bear.
Without a song, the hills will be too hard to climb.
Without a song, the valleys will be too deep.
Without a song, the rivers will be too wide.
Every once in a while you ought to sing.

What will you sing?

I will sing: *"I'm so glad trouble don't last always."*
I will sing: *"There's a bright side somewhere."*
I will sing: *"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine."*
I will sing praises unto him!
It's just another chance to sing!