

D/N LADY GLASSPOLE

In praise of Lady Glasspole

The following is an edited version of the sermon by Rev Dr Byron Chambers at the funeral service on January 8 for Ina Josephine Lady Glasspole, wife of former governor general Sir Florizel Glasspole. Lady Glasspole died on January 3.

SO death has come very suddenly to a loving wife, and mother, grand-mother, sister and friend. Everyone of us would agree that it was unexpected. But then death is never easy, nor welcomed — it brings with its pain an added dimension of shock and disbelief.

What a difficulty we all have to accept the fact that one who so short a while ago was sharing our life is now gone.

Death will come whether we are fully prepared for it or not. It does not discriminate as far as age or position or possession is concerned.

Sudden death or any other form it takes is a sharp reminder that our human life is fragile and temporary. Jesus reminds us that we all must prepare for death, because we do not know when the Son of Man will come.

What then shall be our focus today? Not on death, but on life. God has never promised anyone that we shall not die. The question confronting us right now is not — "Shall we die?" or "How shall we die?" nor even "Where shall we die?" but rather "How shall we live?" Life itself is the great question, and how we live our lives is ever before us.

Lady Glasspole has given the answer as to how she lived her life. In many ways her life impacted itself on thousands of people. She was warm and loving to young and older people alike.

Peter the Apostle, in writing to Christians who were being persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ, said that the purpose for their trials was to prove that their faith was genuine. "Even gold," he said,

"which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure."

Lady Glasspole's faith showed its genuineness, as she herself bore great pains, physical and mental without bitterness. With the Psalmist she would have said quite often "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits and in His word I hope."

The Psalmist never gave up hope in God, though in many circumstances, through many trials, he was tempted to give up hope. Instead of confining God to his ideas of what should happen to his life, he allowed God to shape the future.

Lady Glasspole exemplified hope and then allowed God to shape her future. We too can, in today's Jamaica, follow the example of having hope, rather than dwelling on a sense of hopelessness, rather than perpetual complaining; we too should ask God to shape our personal future and the future of this lovely nation.

A nation with so much potential, a nation which can set the example of hospitality, unity and love. Are we like her trusting in the Lord, rather than leaning to our own understanding? It is only when a life is totally committed to God, who give gifts to men and women are they able to influence others for good.

Only when the self abdicates and Jesus Christ dominates a person's life can that person's life end power seeking, selfish ambitions, and



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become the servant of all; only then can such a person help with the transformation of lives, and the poor social conditions in a nation like ours.

LADY Glasspole's life exemplified that type of servanthood, giving at all times glory to God and not to self.

In our daily living, each of us can influence another for good or bad. For instance, one young man, now aged between twenty-nine and thirty years with several knife cuts on his body, told me that at age 12 he killed someone, and so he has continued over the years. He said he cannot tell me how many lives he has taken since then. He said he

was influenced to do bad by an uncle. If that is the case, what a judgement on that uncle's life?

Leslie Weatherhead says, "It is a solemn thought on which we all should ponder. "Everyone of us," he says, exerts an influence on others either for good or ill. The impact of our personality on another either makes it easier or harder for that person to live the good life. "No one is neutral," he says. No one counts for nothing. There is no one who makes not the slightest difference to other's lives. We are either on the side of God or the devil; either we support the forces that make for goodness in the world, and especially in Jamaica, or those who make for evil. We cannot escape from this situation anymore than we can escape casting a shadow on a sunny day, and it is either a shadow of healing or a shadow of harm. God, looking at our lives (and not from a distance) knows which it is.

Phillips Brooks, the famous American preacher once said, "No man or woman, of the humblest sort can really be strong, gentle, pure and good, without the world being better for it, without someone being helped and comforted by the very existence of that goodness."

We have been told of the Valley of Roses. It is so extensive that the air is heavy for miles with the perfume of the flowers. Anyone who passes through that valley finds that the scent hangs in her or his very clothing, so that, if he or she goes into a room full of people at the end of his or her journey, they look at

one another and smile. They know where he or she has been. In the earlier days of Christianity men and women knew why Christians exerted such a marvellous influence on others. They stated the secret in a single sentence: "They have been with Jesus."

The late Lady Glasspole exemplified that type of Jamaican, who has been with Jesus, and who, in a former period of our Jamaican history —

*"Gave without counting the cost,
Fought without heeding the wounds;*

Laboured without asking for any rewards,

Save that of knowing that she was doing the Master's will."

THAT'S why the groups and organisations in which she gave of her time, talent and treasure will continue to cherish the shadow of her influence and to continue serving without reservation or constant complaining.

Jamaica's hope for unity, peace, justice, discipline and high moral standards and the elimination of poverty and violence lies not in the wwords of cynics or great economic miracles, but in the type of Christian influence and servicee that all of us in all walks of life and professions bring to bear on each other, either for good or for evil, and surely for a better Jamaica.

Lady Glasspole has surely left behind many challenges to which we must rise if we are to see a better Jamaica for the new millennium. The end of violence, disunity and much poverty. She would say to us:

*"Every virtue I possessed
And every conquest won
And every thought of holiness
Belonged to God above
To God be the Glory"*

We are challenged to give our total life and service as she did to God and to the nation.