

# TOMMY MCPHERSON FUNERAL

Death: August 19, 2024 @ 8 PM/Funeral August 24, 2024

“Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen.”

When I was a child my Mom prayed that prayer with me when she tucked me in at night. It's not a bad prayer. Praying that the Lord keep us through the night, body and soul, has been common throughout human history. Also the prayer to be with the Lord should we die in our sleep and never awaken again in this world is very wise and if the Lord grants that request it is the richest of blessings. If my body should end its life on earth, then Lord please take my soul to be with you forever. Tommy was in the Navy, and many seamen have prayed a similar prayer as they sailed their ships at night into hostile waters.

One night before we prayed at bedtime I asked my Mom if we could not pray that prayer anymore. She asked me why. It wasn't that I didn't want the Lord to take my soul, but I didn't like thinking of dying in my sleep. It was too scary a thought for me at that time. So she agreed to stop praying that prayer when she tucked me in.

The other prayer I remember from childhood took place before meals.

“God is great. God is good. Let us thank Him for our food. By His hands we all are fed. Give us, Lord, our daily bread. Amen.”

Now that was way better for a prayer. There was no mention of dying before we ate. It was mostly about food and our thankfulness for the Lord's provision of it, of which I think we are all thankful, or should be.

I want us to think of that prayer this morning, not in regard to food, but regarding the first 2 statements of this prayer. God is great. God is good. Declarations of the character of God in Scripture are absolute statements. They are true even if the whole world denies them and will not believe. A person may not think God is great, but He is. They might doubt His goodness, but God is good. I especially want to direct our attention to the goodness of God.

Even on this sad occasion we have every reason to proclaim the goodness of the Lord toward Tommy. God was good to Tommy. Some might challenge that statement by noting that Tommy had cancer and suffered a long time in body both from his previous accident and the subsequent health issues he had to fight. Tommy had to deal with a lot of pain and discomfort and disability. He spent extended times in hospitals and underwent several surgeries. Surely, some will say, if God had been good to Tommy he would not have suffered through so much as he did.

The thing about the goodness of God is that it is not merely circumstantial. God is good in Himself. That means He is inclined to be good to all His creation. Every person on earth enjoys the goodness of God. Honestly, if I were God with my own mind and wisdom, there are people on earth I would not be good to. You would likely be the same.

But we are talking about God, not us. Every good and every perfect gift comes from above. The Lord gives joys innumerable. He doesn't do this because of us; He does this because of Him. God's goodness permeates our lives. Sickness or any other difficult time does not nullify the abundant goodness of God. In fact, God is so great that His goodness is exercised even through suffering, and not merely in spite of it.

We can, in fact, say that anything we would have chosen for Tommy would not have been as good as what God chose for him. Things we consider to be good may turn out to be very bad. We don't have the wisdom of God. I would have preferred that Tommy had not gotten cancer. If it was up to me I would banish cancer from earth entirely. I hate cancer. I hate what it does to people in body and spirit and I hate how many families are burdened by having to deal with it. I've seen it in infants and small children and one of the first funerals I did as a pastor was for a 3-year-old child who died of cancer.

The Bible tells us that the hidden things belong to the Lord, and He has many things that He hides from us. Sometimes innocent babies suffer and die in infancy while others who never name the name of God live long lives. So let's not be distracted by the bad things in life as they relate to the goodness of God. When I say God was good to Tommy I mean it every word.

When Tommy died he was surrounded by family—a wife speaking to him of her love and children wanting to be near their father as he traveled the last few steps in his journey. Chris told me how they had been much in the Bible as the day approached and that Tommy was seeking the Lord. I can attest to the fact that he was confident and hopeful in soon being with the Lord. He fought to the end. He was willing to try all possible treatments. He was hoping for more time. He knew that the most likely scenario was that he would not survive for very long but still he tried. He didn't give up.

A little while ago Tommy said his good-byes to me on the phone. The last time I saw him he could not speak. But on that day he was mindful of the time approaching. He wanted me to do his funeral. It was emotional.

When every one of us reaches the end of our lives none will be able to accuse the Lord of not being good to them. Do you have children you love and cherish? A husband or wife? A nice home? A job? Good health? Has God shown you mercy? God has been good to you.

God has two broad areas of goodness. First, God is generally good. This is also called common grace. God is good to the meanest man on earth because He is a good God. So many who receive truckloads of the goodness of God never discern where their blessings come from, but they come from the Lord. The Lord isn't good to us because we are worthy. He is good to us because He is worthy and He always acts in accordance with His nature and will.

The second area of God's goodness is the special kind. Not everybody gets that. Parents give gifts to their children because they are their children. No one has ever pulled up in my driveway and said, "Here, have this car for my son's birthday." God's special

goodness is toward His children. The only way you can be a child of God is to be born again. You can't just claim to be a child of God by personal declaration any more than you can identify as a child of a billionaire and then ask Dad to send you a few million dollars. God saves His children by divine power and calls them to faith in Jesus Christ. They have by faith cast their sins upon Christ and in return received forgiveness and the holiness of Christ in the sight of God. This special group will be in heaven for eternity and reap the fullness of the goodness of God in a land that has no cancer or sickness of any kind, and no more death.

You are in one of these areas right now. You are in God's common area of goodness, or you are His child and in God's special favor. If God is good to you only by common grace you have no prospect of eternal life because you don't know the Lord and do not walk in His ways. Your sin has not been forgiven. Your heart has not been made new. The blessings of God upon you are only of the general nature that He exercises toward all men. And it doesn't matter whether you agree with that assessment or not; it is what it is.

*He who has the Son has life, and he who does not obey the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*

I tell you this not to depress you, but to tell you that you don't have to stay in that group. The Bible says, "The goodness of God leads us to repentance." Repentance means turning away from your sin because you hate it. It is not the same as stopping sin. People stop and start sin all the time. Repentance is what you do when the Lord convicts you of sin and draws you to Christ. At that point you will not pretend, merely raise a hand or make a decision. You will turn from sin and turn to Christ and embrace Him in love.

One reason people use to excuse them from church attendance is that claim that there are so many hypocrites in the church. I had a politician tell me that once to which I replied by asking him if there were any hypocrites in politics of which he was in, and he assured me there was aplenty. Going to church is not the same as being saved by the Holy Spirit. Zillions of people go to church who don't know the Lord. So yes, there are plenty of people who claim to be Christians who aren't. So does anyone here want to lose eternal life just to be like them?

Now I can't make you repent and believe and I can't jerk you from that general realm of God's goodness and push you into the special area. Only God can do that. But I will say this. Don't wait for God to do it. Don't be lazy about your soul. Jesus said, "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" It is our duty to seek the Lord. To obey the gospel. To grope for God. To plead with Him that we not receive the full measure for our sins. That He in mercy would open our hearts to believe. To make us able to do what we are unable to do on our own.

*Isaiah 55:6-7 Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.*

I am going to open a door for you and let you peer inside. I don't know what you will do with it. Honestly, most people just glance at the open door and then go about their normal lives. But if I open up this door and you see that by repentance and faith in Christ you can escape the eternal punishment of alienation from God and be reconciled to God in Christ, then you will beat that door down to get in. It's an awful thing that we can be offered such a gift and have no desire for it. But again, it is what it is.

The Philippian jailer in Acts 16, after locking Paul and Silas up, heard them singing praises to God in the night. Then the Lord sent an earthquake and shook the prison and all the prisoners' chains fell off. This woke up the jailer who thought all the prisoners had escaped, which brought him face to face with death. You see he was face to face with death before but not aware of it, because at any moment that divine call could come, taking us from this world. In that moment he saw that door opened to get things right with God. So he came trembling to Paul and Silas and said, "What must I do to be saved?" To which Paul replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." They spoke the word of the Lord to him and all in his house. The Bible tells us he went from trembling to great rejoicing, having believed in God with his whole household.

I don't know how many prisons there were and how many jailers and what the normal shift was for jailer hours and how many prisoners passed through this man's prison. But on that night in that place he was shaken to his core and when the sun rose the next day he had peace with God.

Tommy has given us occasion today to peer into that open door. The Lord was very good to Tommy. The Lord is very good to you and here you are with an opportunity to believe. The door has been pointed out to you right now. It may never be shown to you again. But today, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.