

**A celebration of the life of Thomas Sydney Dooley, who died on
February 2, 2017 - by his father Tom Dooley**

(Grace Community Church, Clay AL, on Monday February 6, 2017)

1. On behalf of his mother Laura and siblings - Isaac, Catherine, and Jeannette, I welcome the extended Dooley and Anderson families, friends of Thomas, friends of our family, the disciples of Jesus who call Grace Community Church their “home”, and members of Path Clearer ministries. With gratitude in our hearts we thank you for joining in this tragedy. Yet today is a wonderful day. A day of celebrating the life of my son, Thomas, known online as “PyromanTom”.
2. My strength is improvisational public speaking. Today I embrace my weakness and will read instead. This is one of the most important messages I will ever deliver, and I want it to be understood.
3. It is a tremendous honor for me to be the father of Thomas Sydney Dooley since he was conceived in Texas and then raised in Alabama up to last Thursday. He was our baby boy. He was precious.
4. It is a tremendous honor for me to be the one sovereignly chosen by the Almighty for the morbid and painful privilege to discover his cold lifeless physical body in a chair in his room in our home on Thursday afternoon. Thank God that I was selected for this honor and not someone else who would have been traumatized at the site, for a well-prepared father can handle it. In his final two weeks he had tremendous physical pain in his damaged

esophagus as well as other issues. I was very concerned for him that it might become critical, which it did.

5. It is a tremendous honor for me to be privileged to deliver his eulogy today. It gives me great delight to do so. I've already delivered the eulogy at his grandfather's funeral in Kansas, Thomas Edward Dooley. Thomas was in fact the third of three Thomas Dooley's. I'm the sole survivor. In fact, my book entitled "Hope When Everything Seems Hopeless" was dedicated to the other two Thomas' in my lineage. Eulogies provide an opportunity to add a powerful "Amen" at the end of the message of one's life story. Don't we all love a good eulogy, with or without tears. Our prayer is that this will honor Thomas' life and draw each of us closer to the heart of our Father God.

6. A son of John Manwell (who is one of my closest friends for three decades and partner in ministry) wrote to me yesterday. He clearly recalled me preaching in England that, "By your own choice, you can send two things to the Eternal Heaven from Earth. Would you like to know what the two items are?"
 - a. Prayers – They rise up like the fragrant aroma of burning incense. Thank you all for joining us in praying for Thomas over the years, as well as for our grieving family now; and
 - b. Tears – You probably didn't expect that. Yet they are stored up in vials before the throne of the Almighty. Your tears are an investment that yields a great eternal return. Thank you for crying along with us at this startling start to a long season of grief. In addition, for those who enter eternity in God's Eternal Heaven, like Thomas did on Thursday February 2nd, the Lord will wipe away all tears. For Thomas, tears of many

years of pain and sorrow and suffering and medication and doctors.

7. Today I offer to you a Father's Perspective on the life of a son:
We are all honored today to be witnessing a picture of the Love of Yahweh, the Father God, for this own Son, the Jewish Rabbi Jesus who died as a sacrifice. The son was separated to the Earth to die for us. He atoned for the sin of mankind. Nonetheless, our heavenly Father grieved the loss of His son, just as I am today with Thomas gone.

When righteous Job unexpectedly lost his children in a tragedy, he immediately worshiped while in emotional pain declaring, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, Blessed be the Name of the Lord" – in Hebrew, Baruch HaShem Adonai. Job did not blame God for his loss or his pain. The sovereign Creator of the Universe was intimately involved in the situation, but He had not done anything wrong or unloving. Job wisely chose to worship rather than blame God. The Dooley clan chooses to worship rather than to blame or second-guess God. Please join us.

God is good ALL the time and ALL the time God is Good. In fact, God was good to Thomas as he suffered up to the day of his death, as he was good to me that day as the father to discover a motionless silent Thomas. In fact, on December 13th I received a message in a dream. A voice said to me "Tom, read Psalm 46." When I woke I noticed several familiar verses, and most notably "Be still and know that I am God". I knew that something serious was about to happen and I had to be at rest, willing to trust the sovereignty of His plans.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph never has a bad day. He is never worried with anxiety. He will never leave us nor forsake us. He's trustworthy, compassionate, merciful, and patient with us. He's a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Right now, don't we all need a friend like that?

8. I will now offer a Father's Perspective on "Who was Thomas S. Dooley?"
 - a. Some of you know only one side of Thomas' complex life and personality. He compartmentalized relationships. He was good at it. He intentionally permitted you to see only what he wanted you to see. But, I'm his Father and I know my son very well from many different perspectives, both good and bad.
 - b. Thomas was thoughtful, compassionate, and sensitive. He was a friend to anyone who felt misplaced, rejected, abused, or abandoned. He had a sensitive radar detector for people who were hurting. Perhaps you were one of his projects. You probably knew this if you experienced the intentional compassionate side of him. It was lovely.
 - c. Thomas had a hard time with his Pappa - me. I was a disciplinarian and a get-er-done driven man. He was brilliant, too...but he just wanted to be himself. Our brains were wired differently. My brain came from Germany. His came from GameStop. There were a lot of misunderstandings between us. Countless times I would callously raise my voice saying "Use your brain!" Then, when I cooled down I would humble myself and say to him "Thomas, will you forgive me?" I wasn't as gentle as I should have been. For many years I didn't know that inside he was living in a hellish repetitive obsessive compulsive disorder

carnival. I didn't know that. It was his secret. He thought that as an embarrassing shameful thing and that he wasn't normal. I unknowingly made it worse. The Scriptures teach us – Fathers don't exasperate your children. I must confess that my anger and words hurt Thomas emotionally as a young boy. He didn't like my demeanor and tone of voice. He was very tender hearted, and I was a bit of a bully. I lacked sufficient Thomas-kind-of-love. Lord Jesus, forgive me. I know that Thomas did. He told me so many times, as recently as October 8th. But, because of this unique situation I alone knew a lot about my son that nobody else was privileged to know. I was there in the ICU when he tore out his dialysis jugular canula at night. I was there when he wrecked Dale Cathey's 4-wheeler and lied about it. I knew a lengthy laundry list of his sins in detail. That is a privilege that a father must steward with great care. Thank God that few of you here with us today ever had to ask Thomas to forgive you. But, I did. And on numerous occasions. Iron sharpens iron. And so does a hard stone. I was Thomas' hard stone. If I had just hugged Thomas more often, who knows what could have been avoided and averted. Fathers listen to me. I hug a lot these days! Mercy triumphs over judgment.

- d. If you need to forgive Thomas for anything, please do. If you need forgiveness for any regrets, the Dooley clan says "You are forgiven".
- e. We have a tradition of adopting the friends of our children into our clan. In fact there are girls named Nicole #3, Kara #1, and Amanda #4. We ran out of numbers, so the next generation of adoptees had the "a, b, and c modifiers, like

3b". Thomas would love for his friends, especially those who have few friends, to be adopted as Dooleys. The Dooley farms are known for hospitality...we're good at it.

- f. Thomas was eclectic, quirky, creative, and unflappable. He loved fires, firecrackers, and explosions. I would often return home to find that he had emptied yet another of my fire extinguishers. At one point as a teenager, he went through four of them in a few days! Once he even put out a fire that he had not started. He was PyromanTom. He and his friends built paraffin bombs in Mountain Branch. He built pneumatic spud launchers. From there, he went on to Glocks, assault rifles, shotguns, and even a 762 Uzzi! His worrisome mother, the pacifist, never approved, not even of pellet guns! But, it earned him employment as an armed security guard, which he really enjoyed. He caught 30 thieves at one job site, a metal scrap yard in Birmingham near the railroad. I suspect he was lenient on the heroin addicts who stole copper to resell to the same company.
- g. Thomas would wear the strangest clothes, rabbit fur, a pimp hat, and use women's bobby pins on this shaggy long hair. He wasn't prone to pledging at a fraternity...even though he attended the University of Alabama for several years. Roll Tide.
- h. He was the only white guy in America to build an Indian Tandoor oven in our back yard to cook Indian. And, that was before Indian films, food, and culture had become trendy. I had the privilege of taking him to India with me on one of my RIMI - Mission India speaking trips. It was like the trip from hell. His luggage didn't arrive in New Delhi, so he wore my baggie clothes. His camera was stolen. He got sick. We

were abandoned at the wrong train station for 12 hours, but at least we could watch the monkeys and rats and people sleeping on the cement nearby. However, the folks on the platform could care less about rodents and nonhuman primates, they thought that we were the entertainment. Not all interruptions are bad (including funerals). They can teach us.

- i. I suspect that few of you knew that Thomas suffered greatly from anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). He had to wash repetitively from adolescent days onward. Although his hands were clean, ironically his room was honestly a pig-sty. So was his closet. So was his car. And, so was his Mountain Dew collection that took up a quarter of our garage shelving. Those cans are still leaking to this day. You may have several if you like. But, on Friday as we started to clean up his messes I said to my brother-in-law “This is the last time I will ever clean up Thomas’ stuff. Let’s take our time and cherish the moment.”
- j. God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to his purposes. In my profession I’ve invented PanX drugs to treat anxiety disorders. This is a result of my deep concern over Thomas’ suffering and coincident treatments by some lousy addictive drugs. The invention would have never happened without him being burdened by anxiety and OCD. But, his pain will now benefit others. He died having inspired a patented safer new class of drugs to treat people with anxiety. Oh, if only we had it a decade ago when his OCD problems started.
- k. In addition to ample pain and suffering, he also had substantial darkness within him for the past decade. He was

so sweet to everyone up until adolescence. But, then he changed. We all have some darkness, but his darkness was crippling to his thoughts and actions. He was enslaved and there was a thief working to steal, kill, and destroy him. He nearly died in Tuscaloosa in July 2015, and I prayed over him in the ICU when Laura and I were told by the doctor “Prepare yourselves, it doesn’t look good”. I prayed, “As your father with authority over you, I love you and bless you Thomas, and I release you into the hands of God. He’s a better Father than I am. If this is your day to go to Him, then He may have you. But, I have another prayer – that you will rise from this bed, walk, and fulfill the calling that God has for your life.” He was initially expected to die, then remained hospitalized for 24 days, and His life was divinely spared! Numerous doctors said it was miraculous. He fulfilled his purpose on earth.

- I. In spite of this dramatic situation the darkness continued. But, I am glad to report to you that on October 8th, I had the privilege of praying for Thomas to be delivered from his darkness and to enter the light of righteousness. He openly confessed many dark sins to God (and to me as a witness) and he was delivered. He was radically transformed on October 8th, and then grew in this new-found freedom. He and I did Bible studies together, that ended at Matthew chapter 20 about the “eleventh hour”. He shared about his spiritual transformation with his friends. Thank God that he was redeemed prior to his untimely death last week. And, thank God his physical life was divinely spared in 2015 to set up this final 3.5 months!

- m. Sure, our hearts are tender and broken at the loss of a wonderful son and bother. But, when Thomas was delivered on October the 8th, He hugged me and instantly cried out, “Dad, I love you.” I replied “I love you, too, Thomas.” And he said to me “Say it again, Dad. Say it again!” It was as if he hadn’t been able to realize that I genuinely loved him for the past decade, although Laura and I had bent over backwards for him. Not to vindicate us, but we did deserved some shiny medals. But, that all changed by the grace of God. Our 11-year old sweet boy had returned. He had been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. He could hear anew that I loved him and God loved him and that evil was real. Good times had returned to our home.
- n. I will conclude with this: On Saturday Laura and his siblings and their spouses gathered at the funeral home for our intimate final “Good Bye” while viewing Thomas’ body. It was very painful for each of us. My final words to him were, “You told me on October 8th, ‘Say it again, Dad. Say it again!’ So, while running my hands across his silky long brown hair at age 24, I once again repeated “I love you son. I love you Thomas”.
- Thank you son, you taught your father how to love!
You taught all of us how to love!

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