

**TJ INGRAM SERVICE
DELIVERED BY RANDY JAMERSON**

It is an honor for me to be asked here today to reflect on the life of TJ Ingram. I don't know of many people who enjoy funerals, but the reflection demanded by such occasions is good for us. The Bible speaks of the need to learn the lessons that are taught by facing death's reality. Notice the words of Solomon:

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth" (Ecclesiastes 7:2-4).

First of all, a funeral is certainly a time of sadness. As the wise man Solomon wrote, *"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven....A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance..." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-4).*

There is nothing unbecoming or disorderly with weeping when a loved one departs. It is a very natural and acceptable part of our acceptance of such a loss as that. Even Jesus wept at a funeral (John 11:35).

Why? Did He not realize ahead of time that Lazarus's death was only temporary and that He Himself would raise him shortly? Surely! But our Lord also knew *"him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,"* and could therefore sympathize with *"them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).*

Our Lord wept because He felt all the pain of grief that came when He "was made flesh" (John 1:14).

Why do we thus sorrow? It is because of the finality of death. *"It is appointed unto a man to die once, and after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27).

Think about what the **death of a child** means to its parents whose love conceived it, who reared it and provided its physical and spiritual needs (II Samuel 12:15-19).

Think about what the **death of parents** means to a child who was brought into the world through them, was tended by them when he was sick, and has been under their guidance (Genesis 24:67).

Think of what the **death of a sister or brother** means to those who have grown up with that person, dwelt in the same house together, and shared the same childhood experiences (John 11:20-32).

But most of all, think of what the **death of a spouse** means to one who has lived with, loved, and cared for him or her (Genesis 23:1-2).

Death is our enemy because it brings separation. 1 Corinthians 15:26 Yet, in spite of this sadness, a funeral can, secondly, be a time for joy.

A funeral indicates a release from physical suffering for those who have been in pain (Philippians 1:21-23). "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth...that they may rest from their labours*" (Revelation 14:13).

In addition, for those who die in the Lord, a funeral reminds us of the hope of resurrection. "*The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*" (John 5:28-29).

Those who are children of God want, like Paul, to "*attain unto the resurrection of the dead*" (Philippians 3:11).

As I began to consider what do say about TJ—and to be brief in doing so, it became apparent that many passages of Scripture which I might read would be appropriate. I thought of the question asked by king David as he mourned the death of Abner, "**Know ye not that there is a prince and great man fallen this day in Israel?**" (2 Samuel 3:38). Truly a great man has fallen.

TJ probably would not have been considered great by the world's standards. Born in Dollar, Alabama (which can no longer be found on an Alabama map). He was one of ten children. **His parents ran out of name and only gave him initials.** TJ battled all of his life trying to convince others that his real name was TJ and he had no other name. I am sure there are many present today, including myself, who have wondered what TJ stood for.

He lived his life humbly and simply. He did not receive a great deal of fanfare or lots of publicity. No marble monuments or statues have been erected in his honor. No schools, bridges or buildings bear his name. His greatness pertained to spiritual things – he was a faithful and zealous child of Jehovah God.

No doubt, TJ's wife Tommy, son and daughter in law John and Karen would build TJ a monument or statue in TJ's honor. TJ's family admired and adored him. And with good reason. Everyone that I know that knew him felt the same way about this good, kind husband, father and child of God.

Each of us preaches his or her own eulogy. What we say here today about TJ is not to be taken as a "judgment seat." Brother Ingram preached his eulogy by his life as do we each for ourselves.

I will use TJ's life as a means of exhortation, but I want you to think about yourself and your own funeral.

Your Funeral: Some things that are important:

1. **TJ had good moral qualities and was a good influence on others.** TJ's wife, son and all that knew him praise his life. Tommy and TJ last June celebrated 59 years of marriage.
 - a. Think of this sterling example and exhortation to be committed to our companion.
 - b. When spending time around Tommy and TJ, you would be hard pressed to find a couple that adored one another more than they did.
 - c. Tommy met TJ through a friend in 1948. When TJ met Tommy for the first time, he never went out with another girl again. Tommy said TJ never had the chance to go out when anyone else because "she pounced on him." They were married two years after they first met.
 - d. TJ in the Army Air Corps during World War II, trained as a pilot and assigned to the glider program, where he was a flight instructor.

One day I asked TJ about what this job entailed.

The U.S. combat glider program was initiated during World War II. These men had been engaged in the risky activity of flying unarmed and unpowered aircraft built of steel tubing, cloth and plywood across enemy lines. These gliders were flown with heavy loads, and were capable of carrying a jeep loaded with supplies, or 16 men. many today remain unaware that there ever was a Glider Corps.

I commented to TJ, "as a trainer, you never actually had to fly into battle?" He shook his head "no" as tears filled his eyes.

Tommy later told me that it always bothered TJ that he was able to stay safe as others flew into warzones and lost their life. What an unselfish and compassionate heart TJ had for others.

- e. Everyone I know loves TJ and Tommy
- f. As TJ's health has failed, many have gone to visit both TJ and Tommy to encourage them. But the funny thing, is those that went to encourage ended up being encouraged themselves.
- g. TJ and Tommy enjoyed traveling a great deal during their life. One of their most recent trips was a tour of various hotels in Birmingham after TJ accidentally stepped on the gas instead of the brake and installed a drive-through kitchen their Montevallo home. Tommy was on the phone with her good friend Clara when this happened and said "Clara, I guess I better go. TJ just drove the car through the house."
- h. Tommy and TJ's grace and sense of humor during this event was a great example.
- i. What about you?—can it be said that you had a good effect on those who know you?

2. TJ Obeyed the Gospel

- a. TJ and Tommy both obeyed the gospel in the early years of their marriage.
- b. Some think that baptism into Christ is the end of the journey- instead of the beginning.

- c. When Gardner Hall brought TJ up from the watery grave of baptism at Midfield church of Christ many years ago, TJ arose to walk in newness of life (Romans 6).
- d. It will not matter what mother or daddy said, or your preacher, but did you obey Christ and did you continue to follow His word to the best of your ability?
- e. The faithfulness and friendliness of TJ and Tommy has been such an encouragement and example to brethren at Elliottsville.

TJ late in life was too weak to participate in the service by publically praying, reading and taking part serving in other ways. He often commented that “well, we can’t do much, but we’re here.” But by being there, he really was doing much.

One brother told me “ Sometimes I just don’t feel good and want to make excuses and not come—and then I think about Tommy and TJ who you know are hurting physically, yet really make an effort to be here. If they can be here, then I can be here.” I don’t know if Tommy knows how much their example of faithfulness, consistency and friendliness has meant to me and others, but I want to say “thank you.”

C. Your Funeral: Some things that won’t be important:

- 1. How long you lived.

“How Do You Live Your Dash?” I read of a man who stood to speak, At the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates on his coffin, From the beginning.... to the end.

He noted that first came his date of birth And spoke the following date with tears, But he said what mattered most of all Was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time that he spent alive on earth... And now only those who loved him know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own; The cars... the house....the cash, What matters is how we live and love And how we spend our dash.

- a. Many people don’t live to be 89, but it is not that long when you look at it from the view of eternity. Will the preacher only be able to say “he lived a long life”?

2. The wealth you gained.
 - a. Some think that the attainment of great riches to leave to their children is the greatest aim of life. But if you spend much time talking to John (son), you know that there are much more important things that TJ left to him
 - b. I don't know how much of this world's goods TJ and Tommy accumulated- certainly not a wealthy man by the world's standards, but if he had gained great riches and lost his soul, what would it have accomplished? **Matt 16:26**
 - c. What about your life? Is your soul attaining some riches?

D. The most important question at our funeral

1. Was I a faithful Christian? Am I prepared to meet God?
James 4:13-15- **13** Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." **14** Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. **15** Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

You are preaching your own funeral.

TJ's son, John told me that TJ rarely "lost his cool." I think most of us that knew him would concur that he was definitely not prone to outbursts. However, when John was learning to drive, TJ did raise his voice on occasion. (As a father who has a son soon to get a learner's permit, I am sure this is understandable).

This conversation led to a subject that often tries our patience And character. Traffic. Traffic causes many to lose their cool, but TJ was a steady driver. He didn't drive too fast, not too slow and always tried to drive about the speed limit.

Those that WEREN'T driving the speed limit would zip by TJ at 80 MPH. John said that TJ often yelled at the cars speeding by "Tell them we're coming when you get there!"

Think about those words for a moment "Tell them we're coming when you get there." Can you yell those words to TJ as he has sped on before us out of this life? Are you going to be where he is?

I am of a firm conviction that TJ could have said with the apostle Paul, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." In view of his life, these words can be a great source of comfort.

We urge each of you to emulate in your life the principles of righteousness which were so dear to TJ, and which were so much a part of his life.

To the family I want to say: Life is a journey that grows more and more interesting as you near the end. Death is a change of location, a moving out of one place into a far better one, for those who are prepared for such a move. We stand in the presence of the mystery we call death.

Babies, young people, fresh graduates, mothers, fathers, old men and old women who have prepared to serve and help others ... all die, there is no difference. May God bless the family and friends of TJ Ingram. Remember the good times and cherish the loving memories in the days that lie ahead.

Graveside

Eccl 7:1-4

- 1 A good name *is* better than precious ointment,
And the day of death than the day of one's birth;
2 Better to go to the house of mourning
Than to go to the house of feasting,
For that *is* the end of all men;
And the living will take *it* to heart.
3 Sorrow *is* better than laughter,
For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.
4 The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning,
But the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth.

I Cor 15:51-58

⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. ⁵² We shall not all sleep, ⁵³ but we shall all be changed, ⁵⁴ in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For ⁵⁵ the trumpet will sound, and ⁵⁶ the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵⁷ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and ⁵⁸ this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁹ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

⁶⁰ "Death is swallowed up in victory."
⁶¹ ⁶² "O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?"

⁶³ The sting of death is sin, and ⁶⁴ the power of sin is the law. ⁶⁵ But thanks be to God, ⁶⁶ who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁶⁷ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in ⁶⁸ the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord ⁶⁹ your labor is not in vain.

I Thes 4:13-18

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, ¹⁴ that you may not grieve as others do ¹⁵ who have no hope. ¹⁶ For ¹⁷ since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him ¹⁸ those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁹ For this we declare to you ²⁰ by a word from the Lord, ²¹ that ²² we who are alive, who are left until ²³ the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ²⁴ For ²⁵ the Lord himself will descend ²⁶ from heaven ²⁷ with a cry of command, with the voice of ²⁸ an archangel, and ²⁹ with the sound of the trumpet of God. And ³⁰ the dead in Christ will rise first. ³¹ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be ³² caught up together with them ³³ in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so ³⁴ we will always be with the Lord. ³⁵ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

I Peter 1:3-9

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! ^hAccording to his great mercy, ⁱhe has caused us to be born again to a living hope ^jthrough the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to ^kan inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and ^lunfading, ^mkept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded ⁿthrough faith for a salvation ^oready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by ^pvarious trials, ⁷so that ^qthe tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes ^rthough it is tested by ^sfire—may be found to result in ^tpraise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸^uThough you have not seen him, you love him. ^vThough you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining ^wthe outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Out of This Life

Out of this life I shall never take
Things of silver and gold I make.
All that I cherish and hoard away
After I leave, on earth must stay.
Though I have toiled for a painting rare
To hang on my wall, I must leave it there.
Though I call it mine and boast its worth,
I must give it up when I quit the earth.
All that I gather and all that I keep
I must leave behind when I fall asleep.
And I wonder often, just what I shall own
In that other life, when I pass alone.
What shall He find and what shall He see
In the soul that answers the call for me?
Shall the great Judge learn, when my task is through,
That my soul had gathered some riches, too?
Or shall at the last, it be mine to find,
That all I had worked for I had left behind?