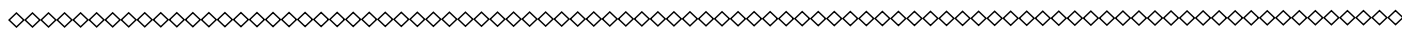




Pastor of the International Baptist Church in Cologne Germany.

**Memorial Service**  
**Text: Psalm 23**  
**Andrew Freddie Thomas**  
 Lorin L. Cranford

Seeking to faithfully proclaim the whole council of God in scripture!



**Welcome:**

Welcome to this memorial service for Andrew Thomas. I am Lorin Cranford, the pastor of the English language International Baptist Church here in Cologne. The family members have asked me to conduct a brief memorial service for Andrew this evening. We want to celebrate his life and remember with fondness the experiences that have been shared together. In a few minutes you will have the opportunity to share a few words of eulogy about Andrew and how your paths have crossed over the years. So be thinking back on those fond memories.

**Hymn - "Amazing Grace":**

1. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
was blind, but now I see.
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved;  
how precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed.
3. When we've been there ten thousand years,  
bright shining as the sun,  
we've no less days to sing God's praise  
than when we first begun.

**Prayer:**

Almighty God, we come to You today with grieving hearts over the loss of Andrew. But we know that in life and in death You stand with us to give hope and comfort. And so our prayer is for this family and these friends who have gathered together this evening to celebrate the life of a gifted musician who touched countless lives. We pray for Your blessing on this celebration. Use it to point us to Yourself and Your grace through Jesus Christ. Through remembering the life of Andrew this evening help us find comfort and joy in the midst of our sadness. Most of all, remind us just how much we need You in our lives and use this occasion to point us to Your Son Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen

**Obituary:**

Andrew Freddie Thomas was born on May 20, 1946 in California and grew up in Shreveport, Louisiana. He returned to Stockton CA with his family and afterwards lived in Pasadena CA, before moving to Germany in 1969 to pursue a career in music. He was one of the original members of the Bad Boys Blue musical group formed in 1983. During the years since, he saw the group experience fame and a growing fan base over Europe, and especially in Eastern Europe. Several songs, e.g., "Save Your Love" and "Luv 4 U," became hits. He passed away at the Weyertal Hospital in Cologne on July 21, 2009 after a long illness. He was 63 years old.

Andrew is survived by his daughter, Aileen, and by four sisters, Betty, Berta, Emma, and Linda. Also, many nieces and nephews survive, as well as many friends and fans. He was preceded in death by his parents and an older sister. He will be buried in California. Andrew was raised as a Baptist Christian.



## **Eulogies:**

Today we celebrate the life of this talented musician. I want to invite any who would like to share a few words about Andrew to come forward and share with us your recollections.

[several people shared reflections]

## **Sermon:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Life is always filled with ups and downs, good and bad. This has been true since the Garden of Eden right into our day. Certainly this was true for Andrew, and is true for each of us here this evening. The one thing that Andrew's religious upbringing in Baptist church life teaches is that in every experience we can reach out to God for help in coping with the bad and in sharing the good. King David experienced this spiritual truth and penned one of the most beloved poems about it found in the Bible.

Hear his words from the twenty-third Psalm:

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; 3 he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff — they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Tonight we grieve over the loss of a father, a brother, a friend. It is one of those down moments in life. I want to encourage you to reach out to God and find in Him all that King David experienced years ago. Two basic discoveries were made by him and can be yours as well.

### **BODY**

#### **I. God is a good Shepherd, vv. 1-4.**

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; 3 he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff — they comfort me.

Out of his upbringing as a shepherd boy, David came to understand God's care and protection in terms of an ideal shepherd taking care of his flock of sheep. In each of the stanzas of this poem we hear of God's tender but firm care for His people:

The Lord is my shepherd,

I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

he leads me beside still waters;

he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff — they comfort me.

My friends, God stands ready today to help you get through life with meaning and satisfaction. When so many people wander aimlessly through life, under God's shepherding care you can have purpose and meaning in life. In moments of depression and sadness, God will restore your soul with joy and renewal. You can experience the presence and leadership of the God of this universe guiding you successfully through the dangers and pitfalls of life. Even in the darkest valleys of danger, God will stand with you in protection and leadership into a brighter day.

But God doesn't force Himself on people. And He will not force Himself on you. Instead, as a loving Heavenly Father, He patiently waits for His children to come to Him for help and guidance. Today, as you grieve the loss of this brother Andrew Thomas, reach out to God for comfort and encouragement. God will lead you through this dark valley into a brighter day.

## II. God is a gracious host, vv. 5-6.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

The second image of God in Psalm 23 is of a gracious host. In verses 5-6, David paints a picture of a royal king throwing a banquet in the royal palace. From his own experience as king of ancient Israel, David came to realize that God is indeed the ultimate King. And of all people, He knows how to throw a real party with a host of invited guests. So David describes the graciousness of God as royal host to a banquet in the palace.

Hear David's words in this beautiful poem:

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

God himself welcomes each guest to His palace for the banquet. The enemies of the guest are permitted to come and see with envy just how well God treats His friends. At the front door He anoints with oil in traditional welcoming according to the ancient middle eastern culture. The food he provides, especially the wine, is boundless and never runs out throughout the entire evening. David as an invited guest of God realizes this is the ultimate experience. God decides to invite His guests to just come live in the palace the rest of their lives. He's that kind of host. So David looks forward to this kind of evening meal every night for the rest of his days!

Wow! God is gracious and good to His friends. No matter how good our earthly friends are to us, none can be so gracious to us as God. None has the resources to care for us like God does. None can be as loving and generous to us as God.

Today, my friends, God is extending to you an invitation. Come home with Him and let Him take care of you. You're invited to the Palace of the universe where God dwells. Neither the chancellor's home in Berlin, nor the White House in the US can compare with this. And I doubt seriously that any of us will ever receive an invitation from the leader of Germany or of the United States to come visit them personally in their official home, much less be invited to move in and live there. But tonight, the God of the universe invites you to come party with Him, and to live with Him.

Through the redemptive work of His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross, you can indeed become a child of God by committing yourself to Christ as Lord and Savior. As the Gospel of John declares (1:12-13):

But to all who received him [that is, Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

### CONCLUSION

Our God indeed is a good Shepherd who looks after His people. He also is a gracious Host who abundantly provides for His friends. David experienced this many, many years ago. Some of you here this evening have experienced this in your journey through life. Everyone here can experience it as well by reaching out to the God of all comfort.

John Greenleaf Whittier said it this way many years ago:

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,  
And tossed by storm and flood,  
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;  
I know that God is good!

.....  
I long for household voices gone,  
For vanished smiles I long,  
But God hath led my dear ones on,  
And He can do no wrong.

I know not what the future hath  
Of marvel or surprise,  
Assured alone that life and death  
His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak  
To bear an untried pain,  
The bruised reed He will not break,  
But strengthen and sustain.

And so beside the Silent Sea  
I wait the muffled oar;  
No harm from Him can come to me  
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air;  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond His love and care.

And Thou, O Lord, by whom are seen  
Thy creatures as they be,  
Forgive me if too close I lean  
My human heart on Thee!

Come to Him and find comfort for your grieving hearts today! May we pray.

**Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for a life lived with joy and service to others. Keep ever before us the fond memories of happy times with Andrew. Use his good example to inspire us to want to help other people in their journey through life. Most of all we pray, become to Aileen, Betty, Berta, Emma, and Linda the God of all comfort and guidance as they travel through this dark valley of shadows in the loss of a father and brother. And for these friends gathered here this evening, strengthen each heart and inspire each to seek You and Your help and guidance through life. Lead us to a brighter day on the other side of grief and remind us of our need of You in our lives day by day. Through Jesus our Lord we pray. Amen.