

## **The Pain of Separation**

2 Samuel 12 v23.... "I will go to him but he will not return to me"

This window was gifted, by Caroline Warren in memory of her husband Thomas, who died when he was 55 and son Thomas and Hamish who were both 3 when they died.

This for me, is a sacred window, for it speaks of a person's pain and grief; It speaks of separation from their loved ones. It speaks of a time in this church, when the members grieved at the loss of this family members.

So what is it about?

It tells two stories – the story of David and the story of Caroline.

It depicts a scene in the life of King David, Israel's most favoured King but a King with many weaknesses.

This is David lamenting over his son's death. It has David's harrowing words from 2 Samuel 12 v23.... "I will go to him but he will not return to me."

Let me share with you the story leading up to this scene that we have on the window.

David was King of Israel and one day his men were in battle but he decided to stay at home – he should have been with his army rather than lounging on his balcony, where he saw the beautiful Bathsheba.

He commits adultery with Bathsheba and has her husband sent to the front line of the army to be murdered, so that he might have Bathsheba.

Not something that you would expect from a King and a man whom God said that this is a man after his own heart.

Yes, even the greatest can fall!

Then tragedy was to strike David.

His son was struck down by an illness and died within seven days.

When David heard of his son's illness, he immediately went to God in prayer, praying, hoping, pleading that his son might survive but tragically the boy died and then we have David worshipping God.

David had been brought to his senses by the prophet Nathan, who told him a story about two men, one was rich and one was poor. The rich man had everything, he had many sheep but the poor man, had nothing, only a pet lamb which was like a child to him.

Now a traveller came and visited the rich man and the rich man refrained from killing one of his many sheep, instead he took the poor man's only lamb and slaughtered it so to provide a meal for his guest.

When King David heard this story, he was so enraged that he said, "This man must die and pay for his sin!" and the prophet Nathan said to him, "You are the man!"

The Lord said, "I made you King, gave you everything...why did you despise me by taking another man's wife and killing him. Then David said, "I have sinned against the Lord."

David welcomed sin into his Palace and sadness and grief quickly followed and his son died and despite David's prayers, they were to no avail and so after the death of his son, David turns back to God in worship.

After the death of his son, his attendants ask David why he is not grieving – "I shall go to him but he shall not return to me."

This is the scene that our stained glass window catches so well, the grief of David, look at his face - it is etched with sadness and pain. His head is tilted downwards, his friend has a hand of comfort on his shoulder. It may be Bathsheba, his wife, in the picture or it may represent Caroline and her two boys and her husband, whatever, it is a picture of pain and suffering and a path that many have to travel in this life.

It is a very special stained-glass window for it tells two stories – the story of King David losing his child and the story of Caroline losing her husband and children.

Many of the stained glass windows in this church highlight suffering: a child's death in the first and second world wars, the loss of a son in the second world war, sacrifice of Elijah, the sacrifice of Jesus, the challenges that faced Thomas Muir, an elder of this church and ultimately led to his death.

But it is not all gloom and doom for the verse that is on the window is David's hopeful words to his attendant, "I shall go to him but he shall not return to me." This speaks of hope for his son, his son had gone to be with God. Yes, in a place of no return, a place of peace and joy. His son had entered the Kingdom of heaven. There was no turning back now and David was saying that he could go to him but to what profit? His son is already in heaven, safe in the arms of God and he is not going to return to him.

Piper – The day thou gavest Lord is ended...

### **There is Hope**

The other half of the stained-glass window is of Jesus. On this window, are some of Jesus' immortal words, "In my Father's house there are many Mansions." It ties in

with our Scripture reading this morning of Jesus' final words to his sad disciples, on the eve of his own death. Jesus gathers them together for the final teaching.

He washes their feet, he shares in a meal and brings to life the sacrament of bread and wine and applies it to his own death on a cross. The bread is his body and the wine represent his blood, all done for the forgiveness of sin and the hope of eternal life.

Now Jesus has crossed the great divide and that in a sense is what this marvellous window is all about – it is in two halves deliberately, it is separated by a beam of wood. It moves from the story of David, the story of the King of Israel to the gospel, the story of the King of the World.

700 years separate the two stories but they are connected.

Here we encounter not a sad Jesus but a Jesus whose face is looking upwards – contrast that to David's looking downwards. We see a face that is looking outwards to His Father in heaven, and if we step back and look at the two pictures together, Jesus is speaking across the divide to the grieving David. In My Father's House there are many Mansions.

Jesus speaks with confidence, with a sense of calm. This is not the troubled Christ before the cross, but this is the Christ of the resurrection. His first words to the disciples were, “Peace be with you”, and these words were on his lips throughout the rest of his days on earth before he returned to His Father.

In this window, Jesus is speaking to the grieving family – both to King David's and also to Caroline's – reminding them of the bigger picture.

For in the first window, the family is locked in grief – they are grieving the death of a loved one.

Their heads are bowed low - apart from the woman's - and that may be deliberate. Is this Caroline looking to Jesus? She was obviously a woman of faith, why else would she put such a window into this church? It would certainly appear that the woman's face is looking upwards in the direction of Jesus. She is searching for a word of comfort. She is listening intently and looking to Jesus for comfort.

She knows who has the words of eternal life. She is engrossed in this person who speaks so tenderly and lovingly, who points the way to eternity.

He speaks with confidence. He doesn't speak of a far off God, a distant God, a God who doesn't know our pain – no, he speaks of His Father in heaven. He speaks of the One that he intimately knows, and he speaks of a future - a future life that goes on beyond this world.

When you come to this window, and I would invite you to come often, study it the next time that you are in Cadder Church. Don't go too close, you need to stand back because this picture tells a big story. It tells the human story.

Sometimes we get locked in cycles of grief. This is the first half of the window – they are grief stricken, locked in their grief and yes this is a cycle of grief. Their heads are bowed so low that we can't see beyond the present and that's OK for that's natural and we are only human, but the woman is at a different stage of grief. She has perhaps moved on and is moving through her grief and looking to the One who has the keys of eternal life, and she is hanging onto his words, and the wee boy that she is holding is this Hamish, her son, whose eyes are also fixed on Jesus.

Then look at Jesus, look at the face of compassion and mercy, a face that knows where he is going and a face that is so reassuring.

I hope that these few thoughts may be of help to you today. If you are going through a valley of grief, a time of pain, may you find the courage and the strength to just step back and look up, go back to the gospels and read of Jesus and study him and draw your strength, as Caroline did and Bathsheba, on the compassion of God.

In the story of David and Bathsheba, the next scene is David and Bathsheba having another son and his name is Solomon. There is another chapter ready to begin for them. There is still hope and that is the God we worship, a God who doesn't give up and who can bring life out of what was seemingly dead, hope out of despair.

I would like to finish with a poem, that I was given recently to read at one of our members' funerals.

*The bird that was trapped has flown  
 The sky that was grey is blue  
 The bone that was dead has grown  
 The dream that was dreamed is true  
 The locked door has been swung wide  
 The prisoner has been set free  
 The lips that were sealed have cried  
 The eye that was blind can see  
 The tree that was bare is green  
 The room that was dull is bright  
 The sheet that was soiled is clean  
 The dawn that was dark is light  
 The road that was blocked has no end  
 The unknown journey is known  
 The heart that is hurt will mend  
 The bird that was trapped has flown*

Amen