

THE Good Shepherd's Heart

LIVING PARABLES

The Voice of My Beloved Ministry Publication



Welcome to the first edition of *The Good Shepherd's Heart: Living Parables!*

These parables are an account of my real life encounters with the Good Shepherd, by His divine design, and the heavenly jewels of revelation, wisdom and priceless lessons in leadership that He has graciously taught me. These encounters took place on the countless prayer walks we have done, walking the beautiful farmland and coastal shores in County Kerry. They are what I call Living Parables where the Master Teacher has me walk something out in the natural, then makes me very aware He is there to teach me a spiritual lesson, wanting me to see another facet of His beautiful Good Shepherd's heart. The parables began soon after I arrived in Ireland in late September 2015, and continue to this day, quite often.

After about 8 or 9 months, I started to understand what the Good Shepherd was doing. He was showing me how priceless and beautiful the sheep are to Him. Helping me see and understand the sheep from His heart, and the great lengths that He goes to in order to restore them back to His sheepfold where they belong. As too often they are left wandering outside their sheepfolds; confused, frightened, injured, covered in filth, bleeding, lame, and some left for dead, with no one to help them.

Often during these times, I would cry out, *"Lord, where are the shepherds, why are they not here checking on their flock and taking care of them, doesn't this upset You Lord?"* I would be so distressed to see these precious sheep left without help, and before I knew it, we were on a rescue mission, as I could not leave a lamb or sheep without getting it the help it needed, or restored back to its sheepfold. I learned a lot about sheep! It was in these rescue missions the Lord would speak to me about His church – the sheep and the pastors, and how often, at large, His sheep are neglected with so few good shepherds tending to His flock the way He expects them to. He was showing me how to be a good shepherd.

In these encounters, the Lord was causing me to be utterly broken for His "sheep" in Ireland, by using the sheep of the land to break my heart to millions of pieces. This in itself was an answer to the prayer I had prayed so often soon after arriving, *"Lord give me Your burden for Ireland, break my heart the way Yours breaks for this nation, give me Your tears for this nation."* Years ago I had learned that when you are called to intercede for a nation, you have to be broken for it in able to carry the burden He has given you. He surely accomplished that in those first 8-9 months after my arrival, and continues to keeps me in that place of being broken for His church and this Nation, so this ministry can do what we are called to do in this land.

With that introduction it is my humblest honor to be able to share the Good Shepherd's heart with you with an encounter I had last Tuesday morning, after finishing a weekly, early morning prayer call with our ministry partner in the States. I pray that these accountings will only bless you, strengthen you and encourage you as you run to finish the race that is set before you. May You hear the Good Shepherd's voice calling you closer to His bosom wanting to heal you and restore you!

In His loving Mercy,

Tracy Hogan



Living Parable: Rescue, Heal and Restore.



After finishing our prayer call around 6:00 A.M. I continued to pray in the spirit until about 7:20 A.M. finishing my time of prayer at 7:50 A.M. As I finished I asked *“Lord can we go for a prayer walk and just keep praying, pray for Ireland, pray for this ministry to do what You are asking of us? Would You please come with me Lord, You know I don’t ever want to go anywhere without You. Please come – teach me how to pray.”*

That is my normal custom, I always ask the Lord to come with me and to teach me how to pray. Often during these times I just pray in the spirit. Since I get up very early for our prayer call, I normally would not go for a walk on Tuesdays, due to fatigue, as I still needed to prepare for our 3:00 P.M. prayer watch. But this morning I felt refreshed, so we headed out the door soon after 8:00 A.M. In the first few minutes I was aware that I was feeling really good, and thanking the Lord for He had surely given me a grace that I don’t normally feel, after so little sleep!

I had planned to do our shortest walk that is about 4 miles, taking me up and down hills, through quiet farmland. About half way, on the windy back roads where there are flocks of sheep with their new lambs; I noticed two lambs near the wire fence. They were away from their mom and the rest of their flock, investigating their surroundings. I smiled at how adorable they were, but at the same time I was concerned for their safety, so I gently scolded them as I walked by, and told them they needed to get back to their flock and not wander – they need to stick together! Within seconds they turned and ran back to the flock! I stopped to watch them smiling at their innocence, yet concerned for how unaware they are of potential dangers.

At the same time, I could hear baaaing ahead of me, and by the sound I knew it was a lamb. After a few more yards I could clearly discern it was a lamb in trouble, but I could not see it. I also heard what I assumed was its’ mom baaaing. I stopped in front of a gate listening for a few more seconds saying, *“Lord that is clearly a lamb in trouble – we have to go help it!”*

So, we climbed over the metal gate, into mucky mud, down the hill, past a wooded, wet marshy area following the sound of the baaaing. I still could not see the lamb at this point, but after a few more yards I could see it was on the other side of a broken down stonewall, near a ditch next to the wire fencing that separated this flock from the one in the field across from where it was.

As I got closer and to my horror, I could now see just how in trouble this precious, beautiful, little lamb was. To make it worst, she became frightened by me and was trying to frantically pull herself free from the wire fence that had

become a trap for her. I kept reassuring her that there was no need to be afraid. She had somehow managed to get her left hind hoof entangled in the wire fencing so it had twisted around her shank bone like a rubber band. She was literally hanging in mid-air with her head towards the ditch and her front hooves barely able to touch the ground! I feared she had pulled her hip out of its socket! It was a terrible sight! As I approached her, she started pulling even more, which was so painful to watch. I quickly grabbed her by the back of her neck and pulled her up so her head was level to stop her struggling until I could figure out how to free her. I kept reassuring her that I was there to help her. Within seconds she became calm and quiet.

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I asked the Lord, *“How do we get her free Lord, how? Please show me.”* I then picked her up, cradling her with my arms so she was tightly next to my chest, taking the pressure off her hind legs completely, enabling me to unwrap the wire from around her shank. She was free in seconds – PTL! But I knew she was badly injured – not knowing how many hours she had been dangling from this fence over a ditch! As well as, it was not straightforward getting back to the flock that was in the field above, which is where I was pretty sure she belonged too, but I was not certain.

So there was no way I was letting go of her until I knew which flock to return her too. And if it was the field above where she belonged, then I would have to carry her a certain distance to get her there. As I held her tightly against my chest, with her head snuggled near my left shoulder, I quickly evaluated the flock across from me, and the one above, and at the same time looking at the fence, and how I found her, I was pretty certain she belonged to the flock above.

Once that was determined, I just held her in that place of brokenness, and spoke healing and restoration in her and over her, praying, *“Lord heal her, heal and restore, restore, restore, restore her in every way she needs it emotionally from the trauma and especially physically*

in her hip and leg." I did not know yet how badly she was injured as I had held her the whole time. But I could not help but think of how a "good shepherd" teaches his lambs to depend on him by breaking one of their legs, and then holding them so close to his bosom until they are healed.

As I was thinking of that, holding this little girl that was beautiful beyond description, I was in awe to find myself in this position, so in awe of the Good Shepherd! My heart was melting to a million pieces! I would stroke her head, giving her soft kisses. She was just so peaceful, so beautiful! There was nothing in me that wanted to let go – I wanted to hold her forever! I was cherishing these priceless moments, as I was very aware the Good Shepherd was there wanting me to have this intimate encounter with Him. I was so humbled He would allow me to be so close to that which He holds so tightly, trusting me with this priceless lamb, to rescue her, to pray for her healing and restoration. I kept thanking Him for this priceless time that I did not want to end.

But time could delay no more and after several minutes I carried the lamb out of the marshy mire, over the broken down wall and set her on the ground to see how badly she was injured. She immediately leapt off on three legs, running and baaing to the comfort and familiarity of her mom and sibling. I was so happy to see them united, but my heart hurt that her hip was badly injured and kept asking the Lord to bring total restoration to her.

I slowly made my way back across the field, keeping my eye on her, watching as mom, sibling, and herself walked to a quiet place in the field away from the rest of the flock. At times I would just stop and watch – it was hard to leave her. Several times she would stop and look back at me. At one point, she looked back and we just stared at each other, her gaze meeting mine – my heart desperately wanting her to be healed. It was in that moment I spoke to her and said, *"The Lord rescues us to heal us, and if we are not broken, He cannot restore."*

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As soon as I spoke those words, I knew it was the Lord speaking through me and He stopped me in my tracks – this is what He wanted me to understand on a Kingdom

level. It is something He had already been speaking to me about in the past few weeks, especially as we pray for the broken down walls and ruins of His remnant to be rebuilt and restored to truth, so we can rebuild the broken down walls of our Nation.

A word He had given me the night before was, *"I can only restore that which is broken."* Referring to His people and how we need to come to a place of complete brokenness before Him, so that He can heal and restore us back to the fullness of our rightful inheritance in Him. Without that brokenness and becoming completely dependent upon Him to heal and transform us His way, it is not possible to restore us to that place of intimate fellowship, as He longs to have with us – to be His Bride.

He was further showing me in this parable, that it is the Good Shepherd Who leads us to our places of being broken. Why? So He can heal and restore us, if we will trust Him, and let Him do it His way. It is in that place of intimate relationship, that we learn to no longer be fearful trying to escape His ways, but instead we learn to trust Him in our afflictions, embracing them so He can work them for our good. That just like that little lamb, although injured and on three legs, she was able to run and find her way back to her mom – to the security of her sheepfold where she belonged – to the place of her healing and transformation. So too, our breakings will cause us to hear the Good Shepherd's voice, leading us back to His bosom.

His heart is to bring restoration to our brokenness, but it can only come if we no longer run from Him. Sometimes in His amazing love for us, He sets what I call "liquid love traps" where He will hem us in everyway possible that the only escape will be into His loving embrace. He desires us far more than we do Him, and cares for our safety and well being more than we ever could ourselves, so He allows situations in our lives, helping us to return to Him whole heartedly. Our breakings can be very painful to our hearts and emotions, but He is a good Father, Who knows it will be for our good. As painful as it is for Him to watch His children suffer, He knows it will mean the broken fellowship between Him and us will be restored.

I overwhelmingly felt the Good Shepherds' heart in a greater measure in how beautiful and priceless we are to Him. For how great is His love for us! What great lengths He will go to in order to rescue, heal and restore us. And in our brokenness we can be assured He will hold us ever so tight to His bosom, bringing the healing and restoration only He can provide.

His heart never lets go of us, instead all too often we are the ones that run from Him, fighting to be free from His loving embrace because the breakings in our lives hurt too much and we do not think we can stand the pain. But the truth is, if we fight to be free from Him in our breakings,

we will end up hurting ourselves more, crippled in our walk with Him, limping along not ever able to receive all that He has for us.

But if instead, we are like that precious lamb, and can receive the help that comes our way, as frightening and unfamiliar as it may seem to us at the time, He will enable us to leap forth in our brokenness, giving us what we need to follow Him wherever He may lead, despite our injuries, so that He can heal and restore us in the fullest measure.

Some times though, the Lord has to let us go so we can learn by our mistakes. So we can learn to trust Him to bring us through the marshy mire pits that we can find ourselves in, that only He can carry us out of. It is in those times that we experience and learn to trust in the goodness of God causing us to become more dependent upon Him – when we realize just how incapable we are to rescue ourselves, and not only how capable the Good Shepherd is to rescue us, but how willing He is to rescue, heal and restore us, if we will let Him do it His way!

Come let us return to the Lord, for He has torn so He can heal us, He has stricken so He can bind up our wounds. For how great is Your goodness and how great is Your beauty Lord [Hosea 6:1, Zechariah 9:17]. AMEN!



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