

THE *Good Shepherd's Heart*

LIVING PARABLES

The Voice of My Beloved Ministry Publication



Welcome back to the *The Good Shepherd's Heart: Living Parables!*

In our May edition I shared that these parables are an account of my real life encounters with the Good Shepherd, which are by His divine design, and contain the heavenly jewels of revelation, wisdom and priceless lessons in leadership and stewardship that He has graciously taught me. These encounters take 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.

It is my humblest honor to share the Good Shepherd's heart with you. I pray these accountings will 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 strengthen and restore you!

In His loving Mercy,

Tracy Hogan



Living Parable: The Wilderness – A Journey of Intimacy.



This morning after waking and coming before the Lord for my time of prayer, I was a bit restless – really wanting to go for a prayer walk as it did not work out for me to do so for the past couple of days. After conversing with the Lord for about a half hour, I asked, “*Lord can we just go for a walk and pray?*” Soon after we headed out the door and my heart was so happy!

It was a beautiful, sunny, summer day and there was still a coolness in the morning air that I was enjoying, as the weather forecast was to be another hot day – unseasonable hot! As I enjoyed His beautiful creation that was all around me, I was contemplating which way to go. I decided on one of our longer walks that we have not done in some time.

With that settled, I was soon in that comfortable place that is all too familiar to me in my times with the Lord. That place where there is no pushing or pulling, but instead where the rhythm of my feet are unison with His footsteps, where the Captain of my salvation leads, causing my heart to beat to the rhythm of my Beloved’s.

As we walked the windy roads, up the hills to a high place that becomes open land that is surrounded by craggy mountains, there was nothing out of the ordinary in our journey. A few ewes were running a head of me. This would be typical for this particular area as some of the land has no fencing and the sheep roam at will. There were a few sheep and lambs to either side of me, who decided to stay off the road!

I continued walking down a steep hill, passing fenced pastures on my left and right. As I did, I was aware of baaaing in the distance, behind me. I did not pay too much attention to it other than being aware of it, as I did not see the ewe or lamb. I kept praying and when I made it to the forest area, I took a short break and then headed back the way I came. Rarely do I go back the same way that I come, but today that was the plan.

While making my way back up the steep hill, I became increasingly aware of that one ewe’s baaaing, discerning by her voice she was in distress. Near the top of the hill I stopped and searched intently with my eyes, quickly scanning the open land – the base of the mountains and the lower valley, trying to find her – asking, “*Where is she Lord?*” Everywhere I looked I just saw open land – no ewes or lambs, but I kept hearing her pitiable baaa! I looked one more time, in the direction of her voice, and I saw her! She was now standing on a high, craggy hill all by herself and let out one more pitiable baaa.

As she stood there I was trying to understand what was perplexing her. From what I could see she was alone, as I

had once again looked at the open land that we had just passed, and the mountain behind her, not seeing any other sheep. This precious ewe was not injured, but she was clearly distressed – trying to find her flock – the one she belongs to. As she stood on that high hill, and from where I was standing, I spoke tender mercies to her, trying to comfort her in her distress.

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In that moment, her eyes met mine and with renewed determination she headed down that high, craggy hill, heading straight towards me! I was pleasantly surprised as my heart hurt for her, and if I could somehow encourage or comfort her in that place of loneliness, fear, confusion, feeling lost or abandoned that she was experiencing, I would with great joy.

I kept speaking loving encouragement to her as she made her way down, reassuring her this is somehow going to be ok. As soon as I said this, and right before she got to me I looked to my right – to the valley below, and I now saw two other ewes nestled against a large boulder. They were not there moments before for I had earnestly searched the land, scanning it for her flock finding none. I was overjoyed to see them! Although they were a distance away, they were in the same fenced land. And, if this ewe now in front of me would take the right steps, find the right path through the tall grass that could block her vision, she would be re-united with them. As soon as I had these thoughts she made a sharp left taking her down the hill, through the high grass, headed towards the valley below, that would bring her to the one whom she belonged to.

At this point there was no way I could leave, nor did I have a desire to do so, until I knew she had made it. Even though it seemed certain she had found the way that would bring her out of her wilderness journey, I had to see with my own eyes that she made it. So, I stood there watching her every step. My heart was so happy for her, and I continued to shout out encouragement from afar saying, “*You’re going to make it, how beautiful she was and how proud I was of her for climbing over the craggy, mountain and hills, to the valley below and that she was going to make it.*” I was feeling how

much Yeshua loved her not wanting her to feel so distressed and fearful, despite her uncomfortable situation.

She was almost there, with one small hill separating her from her flock and her option was to either go left or right. If left, that would bring her to her flock. If right – it would take her around the hill and away from them from what I could see from afar. So, I quickly shouted out, *“Left, left, precious you need to go left!”* But she went right!

My heart became anxious for I feared she had made the wrong choice. But I was soon relieved when I saw that her choice did not cause her to miss her flock. For whatever reasons as to why she chose to go what “seemed” a longer way, what mattered is she made it – PTL! Although I was a distance away, watching from afar, I felt the peace that had been restored to all of us, but most all restored to that precious ewe that had found herself, on a lonely, wilderness journey, on a very hot day – parched, hot, her emotions wearied, yet with patient endurance, determined to find the one she belonged to.

So, too our Good Shepherd watches over our every step, with such tender loving kindness and mercies, not wanting us to feel distressed, fearful and anxious when we find ourselves on our own wilderness journey – the trials and afflictions that come our way. The wilderness is not a pleasant place – it is often painful, lonely, confusing and full of disappointments, heartache, rejection, fear and what seems like failures, or going the wrong way.

But it is a necessary place in our Christian walk if we are to grow and mature into bridal love – to be the Bride of Messiah. It is a place where the Refiner’s fire comes, increasing the heat through situations in our lives with the purpose to draw out the dross in our souls – the imperfections in our character, so not only to deliver us from self, but ultimately to restore us back to His bosom – to that place of intimacy with the Lover of our soul. Make no mistake, it is our Bridegroom King Yeshua’s relentless, fiery jealous love that woos and draws us into the wilderness – where often just like that lone ewe, standing on a craggy, high hill, we find ourselves standing all alone, feeling lost, confused, weary in our emotions and bodies suffering through battles with much loss emotionally and physically, not sure how to go on, or which way to turn.

He does so not because He is cruel or angry with us, no in fact it is the exact opposite. He longs for us to be one with Him – to be His Bride, the one He died for, to be by His side for all of eternity. He will only marry a bride who has an undivided heart, no other lovers but Him. So He uses our wilderness experiences to prove our hearts, letting us decide if we want to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him, wherever He may lead. Or, will we turn to someone else, or something else to satisfy and help us? Our Bridegroom King is a gentleman Who will not force

Himself on us, so in His goodness and faithfulness towards us, He allows situations in our lives helping us to let go of those things stopping us from following Him wholeheartedly. It is in the wilderness that if we follow Him wholeheartedly, we will find the Lover of our soul, developing an intimate love relationship with Him. For it is in that place that we learn to lean upon Him to meet our every need discovering He not only desires to meet our needs, but takes care of us in every way possible, like no other!

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So, beloveds if you are finding yourself in the wilderness, going through painful, difficult times, know our Good Shepherd has not abandoned nor forsaken you, even though it can feel like it. Know instead He is calling you to a deeper place of intimacy, relationship with Him. If you will keep trusting and calling out for the One you love to help you, and no longer depend on yourself or man to do so, be assured His faithfulness will lead you in the way you are to go. It does not mean it will get easier – as often it gets harder. Just like the ewe, once she climbed the craggy, high hill where she could finally see hope again, she then descended to the valley below for it was the only way for her to find the one she belonged to.

So, we too will walk through the valleys that can be the hardest part of our journey. When in the valley it is hard to see your way out for it all looks the same and can feel like a really dry, barren parched place to be. But if we let the Good Shepherd lead and we don’t go by what we see or feel, especially when it “seems” we are headed the wrong way, we can be assured He has not for a moment taken His eyes off us. He will be faithful to watch over every step, encouraging us along the way, keeping us on the narrow path that leads to life, restoring us to the One our souls adore, in fullness.

One mistake we make often, when we find ourselves in the wilderness, is we try to find the quickest way out because the fire is hotter than we think we can bare – it is too painful feeling like it will never end! Instead of trying to save ourselves, it would be better to surrender our will right then and there to the Good Shepherd, letting Him lead us where we need to go, for however long He determines and not try to take a short cut. He sees our end. He alone knows what we are called to suffer through that will bring us to the end

result of our faith, to be His Bride. If we do it His way, the process will purify our soul molding and shaping us into His character, qualifying us to be His Bride. It will look different for each of us and just like that ewe, it “looked” like she was to go one way, but she went what I thought was the wrong way because it was longer and I could not see where that path would take her. In the end she reached her goal – restored to the one whom she belonged to.

Beloveds, the Good Shepherd cares more about our holiness and obedience than what is convenient for us. Therefore it is in our patient, endurance, as we learn to embrace the cross, overcoming trials and afflictions His way, walking through the wilderness clinging to the One we love, where we are restored to that place of intimacy that He longs to have with us. And in that place, despite what is happening all around us, we find true peace – the Prince of Peace Who will be our covering.

His banner over me was love. My Beloved spoke, and said to me “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away [SOS 2:4,10]. AMEN!



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