

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!

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 began soon after arriving in Ireland in late September 2015. They 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.

As I write these words, I vividly remember this time that took place in May 2017. I remember how hard I tried to rescue this lamb, how frustrated I became in that process, and eventually how emotional and physical weariness won over and I abandoned the mission that 'seemed' impossible to accomplish.

It is my humblest honor to share the Good Shepherd's heart with you. I pray this accounting 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 – never forgetting His patience will win many in these last days!

In His loving Mercy,

Tracy Hogan



Living Parable: His Patience Wins Many.



After returning from town and putting away the groceries, I was anxious to go for a walk and just be with the Lord. The weather was on par for a late May day – on the warm side, and a little overcast. I headed out the door, with a route in mind – one of my favorites that overlooks the sea and valley below, with the thought that I would be back in an hour and a half.

As we came to the place where I would stop and enjoy the view with the Lover of my soul, I could see on the road ahead that descended into the valley below, there was a lamb outside its' sheepfold. She was lying down next to the fencing, and next to what I assumed was her mom on the other side. When she saw me, she initially jumped to her feet wanting to move away, but not really sure which way to go.

She wanted back in with her flock, but did not know the way, or how to do it. So with no other option, she had laid there on the outside next to her nearest and dearest, until I had come along and startled her. My heart quickly became troubled, wanting her back with her mom and in the safety of her fields. Both ewe and lamb were distressed by their separation from each other, and if there was any way that we could help them, we would surely do so! So, in that moment, I set my heart and mind to not leave her until she was back with her mom, where she belonged.

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Now this particular area is fairly barren with open fields for miles on my right and left, with no houses in site. The road is very narrow and traveled mainly by the locals, so you would not run into a car too often.

As I got closer to the lamb, trying to figure out how to get her on the other side of that fence, I was praying

and asking the Lord to help me in every way possible. In her fear of me, the unknown and what she was not used to, she had now run down the road that leads into the valley below. I stopped in my tracks, calling out to her, *"Peace be still, the Lord loves you"* and other words of loving-kindness to reassure her we were there to help her, not harm her. I asked the Lord to send His angels ahead to help her turn around and come back.

After about ten minutes, she started walking back up the road to where her mom was. In that time, I was able to find an opening under the fencing large enough for her to fit through and only inches from where her mom was now standing. That was probably how she got out to begin with – mommy ewe you are so smart, thank you for showing me! I became quite hopeful! If we could just get her in front of that opening, how easy it would be for her to be back where she belonged.

I patiently waited for her to make it back to that spot. It took some time, a lot of love and gentle coaxing, with me getting on her level – on my knees, so that my height would not intimidate and frighten her. And, at the same time I was far enough away from that opening that she could find it on her own, yet near enough to help her not to miss it. It took a lot of prayers asking the Lord to help her – to not be frightened, but to keep taking one step forward, to not go backwards. Asking Him to help her see that opening clearly and to give her whatever she needs to walk through it.

Patience seems to have worked, she was now standing right in front of that opening – PTL! I was thrilled and thought this precious lamb would soon be in her fold and I would be on my way back to the house. I did not know this was only the beginning of many attempts to help her through that opening. As I stood low before her, encouraging her to walk through it, she just stood there baaing. She seemed paralyzed and blinded to that opening. I honestly was baffled in how she could not see it – it was so obvious! And at the same time, I desperately wanted her to go through it. I asked the angels of the Lord to help her – guide her and direct her, that she would be able to go through.

To my discontent, she walked away and then started running, baaing as she went, in the opposite direction.

Her mom became more distressed following her on the other side of the fence, baaing. As I watched, waiting and hoping she would turn around and come back, it became clear this was not going to happen. As she went further away from her flock, I went after her, praying, *“Lord help! Help her to turn around and come back.”*

While I was still far from her, I could see a car coming towards us. In one way this was good for it caused the lamb to turn around running back in the right direction, for she chose to run right in front of the car. At the same time, though, this caused me to soon lose sight of the lamb altogether, for when the car slowly passed by that precious lamb was now being herded down the road into the valley below, by the car!

I no longer heard any baaing, and I feared we had lost the lamb for good, but I had not given up hope. I walked back to the place where the road descends below. I could not see the lamb anywhere. My heart was more grieved than ever for this little one to be returned to her fields, if possible. So, I started walking down the hill to see if I could find her. I was soon overjoyed to see her in the near distance walking back up the hill! I quickly turned around, optimistic that we could still get her to go through that opening, as she was once again heading that way.

I waited at the top of the road for her, near that opening. As she made her way closer, I encouraged her with peaceful, loving-kind words. She was not as fearful as before and walked calmly by me. I did not get too close, wanting her to stay calm and not miss that opening. As she approached the spot, she stood right in front of it. After hesitating for a few moments, seeming blinded to the safety that opening would provide, she continued walking up the road. This time, in the opposite way of the valley below, baaing as she went, looking for another way into her fields.

By now much time had gone by and I was becoming tired, thirsty and weary. This prayer walk was becoming a lot longer than I had planned. Which would be fine, if we could get the lamb back in her fields, but that prospect seemed to be fading.

As I walked in the direction of the lamb, an idea came to mind restoring hope and strength to keep trying! There was a metal gate that was apart of her fields that was near the direction she was headed. If I could open it and get her to head towards it, the mission would be accomplished. And would be so much easier than what I had been trying.

While evaluating this option a new concern presented itself. With some effort I was able to open the gate, but it swung wide open. In order for me to herd this lamb through the gate, I would have to leave it unattended. Because of the other sheep in this field, although not near the gate, I did not want any of them to escape – that would surely not be helpful to anyone! As I was pondering this over with the Lord, the car that came by earlier, is headed towards me. I wondered if maybe this man might be willing to help by standing guard at the gate, while I herd the lamb into it?

With that thought, I stopped the man and asked if he would be willing to help? He was not interested replying, *“No, you know how farmers are with their land”* and drove off. I felt more weary, frustrated and helpless than ever. I was pretty sure we could get the lamb into her fields this way, but I was not willing to do so at the cost of potentially hurting the other sheep, by them possibly escaping because there was no one to guard the gate. Feeling discouraged I abandoned this idea, but knew it was the right thing to do.

So, the only option was for her to go through that opening. The lamb was now in front of me, half way between the gate and that opening under the fence, distressed and baaing. Still determined to not leave her until she was safely with her mom, I walked towards her, gently herding her towards that opening, not getting too close, but close enough to guide her. As we got near that opening, I was praying for her to move towards it, for angels to guide her through it. All to no avail! This time, she ran back down the road that leads into the valley below, baaing all the way!

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So, after more than two hours of trying to restore her back to her fold, I stood there defeated and discouraged, and just cried. I was in tears for I did not want to leave her that way, but at this point I

felt I had no option. My heart hurt for her. I wanted her back with her mom, back in the safety of her fold. Instead, I last saw her running the wrong way, distressed, baaing, crying for help, until she was no longer in sight. I was in tears because no matter how hard I tried I could not help her.

Heartbroken, I said Lord, *"It breaks my heart to leave her, but I just can't do anymore."* The Lord soon started speaking to me as He knew my thoughts. I was now thinking about His sheep – not the sheep of the fields. I was thinking about a particular beautiful, young, precious lamb, that we loved greatly, that had been put into my life to disciple. I had been trying to help her overcome some of her fears, all to no avail, so it seemed. As much as I tried to reach out, in patience, in loving-kindness, trying to be a be a spiritual mom, she resisted me in every way possible. It had become painfully clear, it was up to her to either embrace me or not. How I could do no more, but to hold her in a position of love in my heart, and to pray for her.

I had been trying to help her overcome some of her fears, all to no avail, so it seemed.

Thinking about all of this, I said, *"Lord what are You saying to me? Is this her end – in her fears, stubbornness, pride and rebellion will she not make it back into Your fold? Will she not make it because she has refused Your endless love – Your rescuing help, causing her to become blind to the way that will bring restoration and peace to her soul? Oh Lord if this is so, this is not good!"* I cried even more! I no longer cared about how late the hour was, how tired, thirsty and hungry I had become. My heart was consumed with this precious young woman that I desperately wanted to help. My heart was torn in pieces not wanting to leave this lamb that I had been trying to get back into her fold, for the Good Shepherd was letting me feel His noble, beautiful heart, His love and the lengths He will go to rescue us, in a measure that my heart was able to bare.

As I stood there sobbing, feeling I had no other option but to leave this lamb for I was not able to help her,

the Lord kept letting me feel His sorrow. That as painful as it is for Him, at times, He has to let go, or what 'seems' like He is letting go. Not because He wants to, but because He will not go against our freewill. He will not force us into His eternal plans, but will give us more opportunities than we deserve to willingly return back to that place of intimate fellowship with Him so we can complete the works our Father has for us to do. And, if we are willing, He will provide more than we need to do so.

As this impacted my spirit, I bawled even more. It was more than my weary mind and emotions could bare in that moment – to think this precious, little one, that I was now thinking about, might not fulfill her destiny to be the Bride of Messiah.

There is only one way that restores us back to that place of intimate fellowship with our Bridegroom King – it is to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow the Lamb wherever He may lead. Many, like that lamb who came to that opening, will hesitate, blinded by fear causing them to not enter, instead running the opposite way. If we are not willing to yield to the Good Shepherd's voice when He calls, by exchanging our will for His, we will miss fulfilling His eternal plans for us – to be the Bride of Messiah. Many, like that precious lamb today, in the Body of Messiah, are refusing His help for many different reasons; fear, wounds, shame, doctrines of demons, pride, stubbornness, rebellion – there are many, many reasons.

Often in our Christian walk, in our weariness and frustration, we try to find another way to accomplish a goal that looks more logical and easier, but can lead us and others into danger if we are doing something that the Good Shepherd is not asking us to do. Or, if we cross a boundary that is not ours to cross by forcing our will on others. That if we do, we will end up not only harming ourselves, but those the Lord has put in our lives to influence. Just like when I had opened the gate to get the lamb into her fields. If I had gone ahead with that plan, I would have not only been disobedient because I did not have the farmer's permission to open his gate, although it was a good intention, but in that place of disobedience I would have the potential to harm the other sheep, by exposing them to the dangers outside of their fold.

The Lord is jealous over us. He does not want any of His sheep to perish, or suffer unnecessarily, by those who try to come in some other way. He is the Good Shepherd. He is the Door that leads to eternal

life. Those who belong to Him, must come in the same way they went out. Anyone who comes into His sheepfold any other way is a thief and a robber.

As I began my journey back, my heart was heavy thinking upon these things. Thinking of both the natural lamb I had to leave behind, hearing her baaing in the distance. And, the spiritual lessons the Master Teacher was teaching me about His lambs that 'seem' to be going the wrong way. As I did, the Good Shepherd shared His heart one more time saying, *"Just because you cannot see the lamb right now, it does not mean she will not find her way back to that opening. It does not mean she will not be restored back to Me. It just means for now you are not able to see when or how that might take place."*

When this encounter happened over two-years ago, I went through a season – a little over a year, where I did not have any contact with this beautiful, young lamb that ran away from me. But during that time the Lord did a wonderful work in her heart – restoring her to her rightful identity to be the Bride of Messiah. He brought restoration to our relationship without me doing anything, after the Lord said no more, other than praying for her and staying in a position of love towards her, believing He is able to draw her back, in His timing. For He is the Master Builder and faithful to those who have a 'yes' in their hearts. Meaning, they may not be where they need to be yet, but they belong to Him and have a 'yes' to surrender to do it His way. Therefore, He will be faithful to restore them back into His eternal plans, and doing so with great care and joy!

Beloved, if this is you or you know others that 'seem' lost or wandering, be encouraged that if we are faithful to keep praying, to keep extending patient love to the unlovable, staying humble – low before them, and keep believing the Good Shepherd is able to draw them back into His fold, we too will see the fruit of that patient love multiply in our lives.

So often when we think it is the end of something, the reality is the opposite. It is the beginning and continuation of His eternal plans working in our lives – as challenging, sorrowful or how off-track it may seem at the time. But His patience will win many in these last days. Our job as believers, as leaders, is to be 100% yielded vessels, exchanging our will for His, being patient in battle, so He can manifest His eternal plans in and through us that the Father and the Son may be glorified.

Being patient in love, patient in battle is more times than not painful and lonely, with many opportunities to be rejected, as we are often misunderstood or falsely accused. But, if we are to be the Bride of Messiah, we need to know we will suffer greatly for others to come into their rightful inheritance that can only be found in our Great Redeeming King. Our sufferings are the sacrificial love of the Lamb flowing in and through us, conforming us until Christ is completely formed within us. That is the call that is upon all of our lives – to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow the Lamb. It is the call for His Warrior Bride to overcome by the Blood of the Lamb, by the word of her testimony, not loving her own life unto death, until and until every captive that can be set free is free, until every soul that can be saved is saved!

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The Lord does not delay and is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing [2 Peter 3:9, James 1:4]. AMEN!



The Voice of My Beloved
A Call to the Nations Ministry

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