

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.

Sometimes in life we can become blinded by pain, or circumstances that seem too much to bear. In this encounter, I experienced the never-failing love of the Good Shepherd to rescue His own to the uttermost, bringing freedom.

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 – calling you out of captivity and into the fullness of the freedom that He has for you!

In His loving Mercy,

Tracy Hogan



Living Parable: Blinded By Pain.



After my morning time of prayer with the Lord, and taking care of a few things for the ministry, I was looking forward to getting out for a walk with the Lord. The weather wasn't the best nor was it the worst for a cold, wet winter morning. The showers had stopped, but there was still a threat of their return as the sky above was dark and overcast.

I decided to go on our route that winds in between the quiet farmlands, that eventually brings you onto the main road that takes you into town. It was winter time so the roads were quieter than usual. While lost in my thoughts and prayers with the Lord, after about a half hour, I made my way up the hill that brings you onto the main road. Although it was cold, I liked the fresh air that was blowing on my face, refreshing me, as I continued to pray in the spirit.

As I approached the bend, I heard baaing in the distance. It caught my attention for I could discern it was coming from one who was distressed and in trouble. It was open land on both my right and left, with a few farmhouses in between. The fields on my right, were rocky and steep, being apart of a mountain side. The fields on my left, were scattered, full of bramble bushes and gorse that led to a small creek below with fields on the other side of it.

The cry for help was coming from the fields that were on my left, but I could not see any lamb or ewe in sight. I stopped to search the fields intently with my eyes. As I did, every now and then a weak, pitiable baa would fill the air. This caused me to look even harder, asking the Lord to help me, "Where is it Lord?" I soon spotted it in the distance, very near the creek.

From afar, this did not appear to be too difficult of a rescue mission, and I quickly found a way over the fencing and made my way down the fields, to the ewe that had somehow gotten herself entangled. She was caught in a bramble bush and had become entangled in its' thorny branches.

As I got nearer, I could see she was in quite a mess! There were several thorny, bramble branches woven into her long, wool coat – all around her head, neck, horns and legs, so she was not able to move. Every

time she tried to move, the thorns dug into her coat and skin keeping her a prisoner to them. She was weak and my guess, by the state of the soil around her, is she had been there for at least a few days. There was no way for her to free herself without someone's help.

I stood near to her, speaking kindly, reassuring her I was there to help get her free. Although not too sure how to do so, without the bramble's thorns tearing me to pieces. They are sharp and merciless and I did not want to be injured by them. If only I had a pair of heavy gloves to protect my hands. Thinking "Lord, how do we do this?" He soon reminded me of a heavy plastic bag in my pocket. It is what I used for the cows treats, and I had meant to take it out before I left, but forgot about it. I was so glad I had not done so, as I could use this to protect one of my hands – PTL!

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With a plan of protection in place, I quietly approached the ewe. She was frightened by me, and at the same time, not able to move much so that worked, initially, in both of our favors in getting her free. I started with the branches that had entangled her legs. As I did, she cooperated nicely by not moving. So, one by one, I was able to pull them out of her thick coat, causing her to regain freedom to her legs. We were making slow, but good progress!

Trying to get the thorn branches that were tightly woven around her neck and horns, proved to be much more difficult. Because of the way she was positioned and entangled in the thorn bush, I could not get a hold of the branches. She had struggled a lot trying to get herself free, before I had gotten there, so these were particularly hard to pull off. They were like a noose pulled tightly around her throat, buried deeply in her long, wool coat.

Seeking the Lord for His constant help and wisdom, knowing that I had surely never done this before, our only option was to reposition the ewe, so I could access her head area. At least her legs were free, so that was now possible. I moved to the other side and was able to turn her around 180 degrees, so her head was finally no longer stuck in the thorn bush, enabling me to work on removing those branches.

All of a sudden, she panicked, and with great force turned around, 180 degrees, and forced herself right back into the thorn bush, with me in tow! Because the bush was next to the creek, and the ground not level, as she turned around, I grabbed a hold of the bush so not to fall into the creek – ouch! I was baffled – why did she do that? She went head first right back into the very thing that was hurting her and holding her captive – causing her more pain and distress! The thorn branches were now even tighter around her horns, head and neck. Seems like we took two steps forward, only to take 10 steps backwards!

I kept praying for the Lord's help. *"Help her Lord to not be so frightened. For her to know that she was headed the right way – the way that will set her free from this bondage and pain. That her captivity may have become familiar to her, but it is hurting her, not helping her."*

As I prayed, I tried again to turn her around. As I did, I was able to quickly get the branch off her neck – that was a miracle! As I tried to loose the one that was woven tightly around her head and horns, she started to become anxious. I steadied her, with my arms and body, while still pulling at that last branch. It seemed impossible to get loose! I kept tugging at it, and holding her at the same time. In the blink of an eye, the release came and the ewe was free – PTL!

Another miracle, for there was nothing in the natural that could have caused that branch to give way. I could only give great praise and thanks to our Good Shepherd, Who is the only One Who can set the captives free! She stood there for a second until she realized that she was free. She then ran across the field baaing, to join her fold in the field across from the creek. As I walked across the fields making my way back to the road, I stopped for a moment to watch her. As I did, she too stopped and turned my way, and we just looked at each other – her gaze meeting mine.

I was so happy she was finally free. So happy for her and could feel the Good Shepherd's heart once again,

thanking Him for this time and for allowing me to feel His high and noble heart towards His sheep. Feeling the joy in His heart when we are free.

We all go through times in our walk, where we become blinded by pain. By situations that seem hopeless, some where we have suffered much loss. Where our prayers seem to have gone unanswered year after year, causing us to embrace the lies the enemy whispers into our minds about ourselves, about others – our situations. Causing us to lose sight of the Good Shepherd's plans for us by becoming bound up in pain, sorrows, despair, defeat and discouragement.

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Beloved, if that is you, be of good cheer. Not only does our Good Shepherd, the Lover of our soul love you – He cares for your every need! You may feel trapped and paralyzed right now, taking two steps forward to find you have gone several steps backwards – just like that ewe. And no matter how hard you try to fight the good fight of faith, by fasting and praying – by surrendering your will for His, for breakthrough and deliverance to come, you feel more helpless than ever with no help in sight. You may feel your prayers have become weaker and weaker – some days just a whisper, crying out for help. Barely holding on to the thread of hope you have left, that against all odds your breakthrough will come.

Sometimes when our pain – or fears have become a familiar place, when the help comes, we run in the opposite direction. Head first right back into the very things that have been hurting us and our relationship with the Lord. Wrong attitudes, offenses, unforgiveness, addictions. When we do, we take others with us,

causing pain and sorrow to those relationships. We become blinded by our pain. Feeling forgotten and forsaken, for our trials seem too much to bear.

But be assured the Good Shepherd knows how to rescue when nothing we do in the natural can. He does not want you to lose heart, nor to grow weary or to faint. Instead, He is reminding you today, that in due season you shall reap a great reward. That just like that ewe, even though her baas were becoming weaker every day, yet in that place of captivity, she kept crying out. And because she did, her Rescuer came and set her free! Her deliverance came in a split second, giving her victory over the very thing that was trying to overcome her; restoring her back to freedom!

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Yeshua, our beautiful Savior – our great eternal High Priest, Who forever liveth to make intercessions for us, was pierced, scourged, bruised and afflicted that we might live and not die. That we would live in the freedom of the fullness of His truth that sets our captive souls free. Free from all fear. Free from all bondage. Free from all hopelessness and despair. Free from every way this world's ways of doing things has stained our souls with its filth and compromise. Free from every way our emotions have been taken captive by the lies the enemy tries to force upon us and our loved ones. Free from all religion and fear of man, so we can be in an intimate love relationship with our Bridegroom King. Free to live so we can surrender all to Him, that we can become all that we were created to be – the Bride of Messiah. When we overcome, victory brings freedom.

And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed. But now since you have been set

free from sin and have become the slaves of God, you have your present reward in holiness and its end is eternal life. For you, brethren, were called to freedom; only [do not let your] freedom be an incentive to your flesh and an opportunity or excuse [for selfishness], but through love you should serve one another [Deuteronomy 31:8, Romans 6:22, Galatians 5:13]. AMEN!



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