

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.

At times, life's circumstances can be overwhelming causing us to become weary in battle. But the Good Shepherd does not want us to give in, give up or give over to what our eyes may see or what our flesh may feel. Instead, He wants us to hold on tightly to the eternal plans that the Father has for our lives. That no matter how hard or discouraging it may feel at times, He is making a way where there would appear to be no way, and when we least expect it!

May you hear the Good Shepherd's voice reassuring you of His faithful, never-failing love to pull you through, every time, all the while strengthening and encouraging you to finish the race that is set before you!

In His loving Mercy,

Tracy Hogan



Living Parable: Hard Pressed, Yet Not Crushed!



It was a dull, overcast summer's day as I headed out the door to walk and pray with the only One whom my soul loveth and adores – the Lover of my soul. It was not too warm or too cool, just right for walking. After finishing a ministry prayer call earlier, I found myself feeling a bit drained, but grateful for the grace to be able to walk the land and pray one more time!

Having another prayer watch this afternoon, we only had time for one of our shorter walks. Therefore, deciding on the route that winds up and down the hills over the quiet backroads that pass the many farm fields. No matter how many times that we have walked this particular route, the surrounding landscape with the mountains in the distance, the green valleys and hills all around and the sea a stone's throw away is always a beautiful sight to behold. No two times are ever the same and today was no exception!

Lost in prayer and about half-way into our walk, my thoughts and eyes fell quickly upon a young lamb trying to get into an empty sheep pen. This precious little lamb was stuck between the gate and the cement block wall that was attached to the gate. She had squeezed her head and upper body through that very narrow opening, but could not press through for the metal gate and cement blocks were pressing in tightly on her sides – near her hips.

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I stopped to see what had compelled her to get herself into such a hard-pressed situation, and could see the feeding trough in the center of the pen was full of fresh grain. The farmer must have left it there for the younger lambs to squeeze their way in to eat, while keeping the older ewes at bay. As this little lamb was trying to push her way through, she was surrounded by many other lambs and ewes who all wanted to eat the grain too!

As I evaluated the situation, I could see that she was distressed and weary from trying to make her way

into the sheep pen to get to the feeding trough – the very source that would strengthen her and cause her to grow. She was desperately trying to get to the trough – all to no avail! Instead, she was trapped with cruel metal and cement pressing into her sides and hips every time she tried to move forward. In that moment, feeling great compassion for her, as I stood on the outside of the sheep pen, I re-assured her, *“Hold on precious, I will help get you free, hold on.”*

While looking at her surroundings to discern the best way to do so, I noted I could climb over the gate that was in front of me and it would take me straight to her, but at what cost? It was the quickest and most direct way to reach her, but I feared that path would cause more emotional duress and pain to her already weary emotions, for she would end up pushing backwards – out of fear, if I approached her head on, causing the metal and concrete to press into her tired body even more.

Wisdom said, come from behind and to enter a different gate that would take me into her field where I could walk up to her from behind without causing her more stress. This gate was about 20 feet away from her and all the other lambs and ewes who were surrounding their beloved one on every side. I quickly made my way over the gate and slowly approached the other sheep. Some of them were baaing, but all looked on with anticipation of what would happen next as I got closer to the lamb in distress. They were hoping that all her sufferings would cause that gate to be flung wide open enabling them all to make their way to the feeding trough! They were going to be sorely disappointed!

With my hand gently on the lamb's back to calm her, reassuring her that she would soon be free, I found the latch a bit tricky to open – it was not straight forward! Deep sigh, praying, *“Lord, I need help, it won't budge – awe, we can't come this far Lord and not set her free. Lord, please help!”* In that moment, by divine counsel, as I try one more time the latch springs open! Praise the Lord, deliverance, victory and freedom comes! This precious lamb is now free to eat freely what had been put in front of her without any more barriers to press into her from every side, making her feel stressed and defeated!

Once again, I was feeling the Good Shepherd's noble, lofty and ever so willing heart to fight for us. To fight

for us to be free from every hindrance that tries to stop us from dining and supping with the Only One Who can strengthen us and supply our every need above and beyond what we need. And at the same time, in the most unique ways all enabling us to finish the race that is set before us.

Often the narrow road that leads to the narrow gate that we are called to strive to enter into is full of obstacles, traps and snares that the enemy sets trying to stop us – spiritually, emotionally, physically and financially. They are all designed to make us feel so pressed in on every side, trying to get us to become discouraged, weary and to give up on His eternal plans and purposes for our lives. For no matter how hard we try to press through the adversity that is constantly around us, with the steps we take to move forward, we feel stuck! We still feel stuck, despite our efforts to fight the good fight of faith and doing our best to not go by what our natural eyes see or what our flesh may feel. At times we can feel so weary, losing sight of our Good Shepherd, seeing no way out or where or when our release will come.

Beloved, are you feeling stuck today? Are you doing everything that you know how to keep pressing into the plans of God for your life, yet, feeling pressed in on every side more than ever with what seems like one setback after another? Perhaps; the loss of a loved one – or many during these difficult times? Or, a serious illness to overcome? Or, perhaps the heartache of betrayal from someone close to you? The Good Shepherd wants to reassure you that His faithful hand is lovingly on your life – for He cares about every detail of your life and He is perfecting all of that which concerns you. That despite what Satan has tried to destroy you with and stop you from moving forward, the Lord is working it for your good, because you love Him. And all things work together for our good for those who love Him, according to His plans and purposes for our lives.

That just when you think you cannot hold on anymore, the Good Shepherd says to you this day– hold on! He is making a way where there is no way. Beloved, be encouraged, although it may not look straight forward and there may be what looks like a faster way, there are no shortcuts to His Kingdom plans for our lives. What may work for another may not be what you need to enter into the fullness of His plans for your life to bring you closer to Him. Although His help may seem to tarry, hold on – be assured He is coming with the help, deliverance and healing that you need!

And just like that lamb, who was pressing in, despite all odds stacked against her, He is coming with His staff in His hand to gently lead you in the way that you are to go. Your breakthrough and release are coming, when you least expect it! Both setting you free not only to be even closer to the One whom your soul loveth and adores, but providing you with everything that you need to fulfill the high and lofty call that is on your life to be molded and shaped into His image and likeness in word, thought and deed. For He is coming for a Bride who will be equally yoked with Him, leaning on the One Whom she loves – one who will have dove's eyes for Him alone – leaving all other lover's behind!

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But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able [2 Corinthians 4:7-10, Luke 13:24]. AMEN!



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