

Few Find It – by Donna Douglass

Scene #3 – Every effort

“So how was the weekend away?” Murray called out as Barry rolled down his driveway the next Tuesday morning.

“Great – I even got a bunch of work done. That made Betty a little mad, but otherwise it was a great time.”

Murray winced, recalling his conversation with Mindy about Barry’s focus on work to the detriment of his family. “Great,” he said hollowly. “Did you get a chance to read any more about what we talked about last week?” He couldn’t stop a note of hopefulness from sneaking into his voice.

“I meant to at the lake, but as soon as I was done with work stuff, Betty wanted us to all watch a movie and that kept us up late, so we slept in Sunday morning, then I had to get my ride in. You know how it is.”

“I do,” said Murray sadly. He bit his tongue to keep himself from wondering out loud how work, movies, sleep and training so often seemed more important than hearing what God Himself was trying to say to him through His Word. But he reminded himself that he had spent many years living like Barry now lived before God had gotten a hold of him and his priorities changed.

“So, what was my question again?” Barry felt a little bad that he couldn’t even remember what had seemed so important last week.

“You asked about Jesus’ rejection of people who said they did all those great things in His name,” Murray reminded him.

“Oh yeah,” Barry replied, a pit of discomfort forming in his stomach. “Did you do any more research about that?”

Murray prayed again that God would speak through his mouth, even as he hid his frustration about the fact that Barry obviously didn’t remember such a huge issue. “Well, when I put together that email I sent you, I looked up all the verses again and again it struck me that salvation doesn’t seem to be as simple and as assured as the church often makes it out to be.”

“What makes you say that?” Barry really tried to focus on what Murray was saying and not let his mind wander to work and his wife’s complaints that he spent too much time there. When Murray was so passionate about what he was saying, Barry felt a little guilty that he didn’t care more about it.

Murray pictured the email in his head, since that helped him remember all the verse references he’d sent to Barry. “Well, there’s the passage you mentioned in Matthew 7:13-23. Last week we talked about the context, which is the most important key to the meaning of a passage. We talk about the context being Jesus’ statement that the gate to eternal life is narrow and few find it, and then His discussion of people’s “fruit”. The next step is to look at parallel passages, like Luke 13:22-28, in this case. Did you get a chance to read that?”

“I wish I had,” Barry muttered, wincing a little with the conviction that he might have mis-prioritized his time a little over the weekend.

“Well hopefully you can later this week. But it gives the imagery of a home owner who shuts the door and won’t let anyone else in, because he doesn’t know them. They argue that they ate and drank with him, but he repeats that he didn’t know them and he orders them to go away. In the context of this passage, Jesus was talking about the kingdom of God. And he begins it by

saying, “make every effort to enter through the narrow door.” He fell silent as they approached the short section of their ride on the main road.

Barry’s mind was a little distracted, but as they rolled along beside traffic, Murray’s last words echoed in his mind: “make every effort”. Every effort. He wondered what that looked like in real life in 2008. He was pretty sure that his “every effort” didn’t go toward entering the kingdom of God, whatever the kingdom of God was.

As they turned off the busy avenue Barry pulled out into the middle of the road to let Murray come up beside him. “So what is the kingdom of God?”

Murray laughed. “That’s a big question also. But as I understand it, The Kingdom of God is everything and everyone that submits to God’s rule as King, both on this earth and elsewhere. So when Jesus says in the Lord’s Prayer, ‘Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven,’ He’s praying that we on Earth might submit to God’s rule – that we might do God’s will in our lives, or that God might ‘rule’ our lives.”(note 1). “Does that make sense?”

“Sure. I guess. I never really thought about it before.”

“And as I’ve talk about it with people way wiser than me, I’ve really come to realize that it is a very personal thing – God’s rule in my life. I mean, it looks different in my life than it does in Mindy’s, or my pastor’s, or yours.”

“Okay.” Barry wasn’t sure where Murray was going with this, or how it had to do with the people that Jesus sent away. But Murray was apparently on a roll, so Barry just listened.

“And as I thought about the kingdom of God being God’s rule in my life, and by correlation, my being fully committed to Him, it just made sense. I mean, Jesus came that we might have life *abundantly*, right? John 10:10 – one of my favorite verses. ‘I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.’ And the closer I’ve come to submitting everything

in my life to Him – by studying His Word, by praying, by talking with my pastor and my father-in-law who is a great man of God, and by really examining my life – the more *abundant* it's become. I mean, the more everything has purpose – and not just for the here and now. It has eternal purpose, because it's all to glorify God and to share Him with those around me. Who cares if the project I've got going on at work flops, if as a result my boss might end up finding eternal life? No one will remember this little project in 100 years, but all of my boss's eternity will be effected if he is drawn to Christ, right?"

"Sure. I never really thought about it that way," Barry replied, vaguely feeling that he'd been targeted by that last comment, but fairly sure that that was not Murray's intent.

Murray realized he might have been preaching a little. "Sorry, Barry. I just get a little excited when I think about these things. It's just such an adventure and yet such a huge challenge: to do 'whatever it takes', and to be 'fully committed' to serving God. But it's so awesome to be in the middle of the stuff that God is doing – especially in triathlon!" Murray stopped abruptly because he realized that he was very excited he was finally able to talk to Barry about these things, but he couldn't tell Barry that without the risk of insulting him. That reminded him of the question Barry had asked.

But they were back at the main road, so conversation paused as Murray fell back into single file. And comfortable silence continued once they turned into Barry's neighborhood. Approaching his house, Barry broke the silence. "Let me look at that email you sent, and we'll talk about it Thursday," he said, vowing that he wouldn't let work usurp his training this week.

"Sounds good," Murray said, feeling a distance between them, but unsure what it was. "Have a good week."

“You, too. See you Thursday.” Barry rode up the driveway, his thoughts going in all directions at once.