

Alarming Mercy
By Scott J Mahurin

The alarm yelled me awake at 6:30, just like every other Saturday morning.

And just like every other Saturday morning, I didn't want to go.

So I stared at the ceiling for a few minutes before finally putting my feet on the floor. Bleary eyed, I trudged to the refrigerator—found my Diet Coke, showered, got dressed and climbed in the car.

I could tell this was going to be another Florida winter day with all the teasing of autumn but none of the fulfillment. It was gray and overcast.

I prayed on the way, “Lord, I am tired. You know that I sense you calling me to this. Thank you Jesus, please just use me.”

I had no cards, pamphlets or information this time. “They can sometimes help,” I remember someone telling me, and, “They can make the conversations go more smoothly.” But I was already halfway there, and the temptation to stay home would have been overwhelming had I gone back to the house.

Pamphlets or no pamphlets, this morning, my heart just wasn't in it.

The city was quiet at this early hour, save the occasional din of large semi-trucks headed for the interstate. I parked on the street and walked past the bus stop along the sidewalk.

I stood where I always did, in a place easily marked by a sad palm tree. This tree sits almost flattened, as if testifying of something seriously wrong.

Would anyone know if I just went home?

I took a deep breath and began to pace back and forth in front of the parking lot, praying as I went.

Several cars entered the parking lot within five minutes. I tried to engage people in conversation. "Good morning, do you have a minute to chat?" None did.

The little old ladies behind me prayed and read Scripture. They come every week, but are silent when it comes to mortals. Earthly conversations are left to me.

Several more people entered the clinic. None of them came over. Some openly pointed and laughed, others just furtively went inside.

Just another day at the abortion clinic.

One couple went in, and the boyfriend seemed pensive. He shouted in my direction as I called across the row of shrubs, but a large truck rumbled past and intervened in the dialogue.

Yet after ten minutes, something amazing happened. He came back out to his car, most likely to get his wallet, and when I asked him to come over to the sidewalk, he did.

Stunned, I began praying.

He told me that I had no right to judge him and his friend because I don't know them. I told him he was right, but a baby is involved, made in the image of God.

He told me the mother was poor, she couldn't afford a baby. I told him I knew of dozens of groups that would help them adopt, and help them pay for everything.

He said it was her choice. I said, yes, it is, but that she can also choose to do the right thing, and that her conscience would never let her live down what she was planning to choose. Would he please let me talk to her? I pleaded with him.

Please.

Then something else amazing happened. An angry young woman stood before me. Almost certainly grasping for words, I told her God was the author of life, that her situation may seem impossible but that God can use it for good. There

were people who care about her, and her baby, who could help. She still seemed callous as they walked back inside.

Silence again. I turned my back for a moment and gazed at the bent tree keeping its desperate vigil. I prayed silently with my own palms reached to the heavens, feeling just as mangled.

But the young couple came outside. They were hurriedly getting into the car and leaving. Leaving.

I motioned to the young man. He rolled down his window, smiled, and said, "You got one today, man, we're leaving."

A baby was saved. The little old ladies asked me what he said. I told them. We rejoiced. What an amazing God. What amazing mercy.

A cool breeze stayed a little longer, and the palm tree looked a little straighter.

I can't wait to set my alarm next Friday night.