

Sept. 8, 2019

When a rock hits the windshield of life

It was a hot Tuesday morning, soon to be a sizzling afternoon. I was two hours west of Dodge City, heading toward Denver. It was an innocuous day; nothing happens on Tuesdays. Even God didn't do much on a Tuesday. He created the sky, but how hard could that be? A splash of blue, a few blobs of white.... Ten minutes, tops. I bet He spent most the day fishing.

But back to my story. I had literally replaced – *Wait*. I just realized God didn't invent fish until Friday (makes sense!). I bet that when He was done with the sky, He doodled in His sketch book, maybe coming up with ideas for later, like the fish, so he could go fishing on Sunday. That's so like God.

As I was saying, I had just replaced my windshield three days before my trip to Denver ... for 225 smackaroos!

("We don't take smackaroos," the guy told me. So I wrote a check.)

The new windshield was so clean, so crisp, so ... clear! It was beautiful! No chips, no bird poop, no bug splats.

So, two hours after I left for Denver, I was driving along listening to a lecture on the financial benefits of giving everything to the poor, when ... "CAARACK!"

"What the ...?"

My eyes were immediately drawn to a dime-sized star – like a picture drawn from one of those old Spirograph toys – pretty in a way, something you'd hang on your Christmas tree if you could – in the middle of my windshield.

It had several little cracks ready to go exploring, leaving hair-line trails across my window. It was just a matter of time. I cursed under my breath. And over my breath. And beside my breath. Then under my breath again, just for good measure.

I'm prone to ignoring things like this, hoping they eventually fix themselves. But all my studies regarding the laws of physics (which come from old Star Trek episodes) told me that windows usually don't mend themselves, at least not with our present-day technology. *If only Mr. Scott were here*, I thought. But he wasn't, so I called ahead to a repair shop in Lamar, Colo.

"Bring it on in!" the lady said musically (she had back-up singers). But when I arrived? "Oh, I'm sorry, but the guy who handles those is gone. I don't know where he went and he's not answering his phone! I thought he'd be back by now!"

He's missing? I hoped the guy was okay, but far more importantly, I wanted to know if there was another windshield repair shop in all of Lamar.

"Carl would do it in a minute," a second kind lady said a few blocks later, "but he just left for the chiropractor. Sorry!" So many kind ladies, so many missing window-fixing guys. Why didn't the missing window-fixing guys teach the kind ladies how to fix chips?

I was starting to get that wobbly feeling, like maybe a brown cloud was following me on this trip. What else would go wrong?

I bought a windshield repair kit, which instructed that the window be cool before applying. It was 110 degrees in the shade. *Cool enough*, I thought. I tore open the kit. The directions said to be very careful not to get any resin on the body of your car. It didn't say anything about *my* body. I opened the container and resin splugged out onto my fingers. "Wait 20 minutes after first application."

I sat in the car, melting. My fingers adhered together, forming a spatula. Would I ever be able to type again? Was there work out there for a half boy/half spatula?

I thought about many things during those long minutes in the 180 degree car. Like when, in acquiring relics, our then-new cathedral wanted a saint's nose, but couldn't pick the right one. Someone mentioned St. Basil's eye, but no-one could see that working out. One priest mentioned St. Francis's finger until someone pointed out the flaws. Finally, when a Sister mentioned St. Annabelle's toe, they all responded, "Nailed it!"

Later I thought about how I should take immediate action to promote apathy.

In other words, *I was freaking out*.

I removed the applicator, and instead of having dried and filled the cracks, a river of resin poured from the chip, running down the window and onto my wiper blade. *That probably isn't good*, I thought.

I wiped off as much resin as I could with a used Taco Bell napkin, and drove off in a state of denial about my horrible repair job. The star was now a little dot, but with a few hairline cracks still visible. All around it was a fog-like blur of wiped away resin. And a little taco sauce.

Three hours later I arrived in Denver. Thankfully, the crack hadn't spread. I pulled up to a gas station and stuck my credit card in the credit card reader. My stomach dropped.

The bank had blocked my credit card. I had forgotten to notify them that I was travelling. They assumed it was stolen. *How diligent of them.* I lifted my stomach back up and went on my way.

Charlene—my support, my rock (along with the Lord) was in Tulsa. I drove on to my mom's place on a breath of gas, my spirit battered and fried. It wasn't just the glass and the card, there were other stresses, other anxieties, that had already weighed me down well before the windshield and the credit card issue. The latter were just icing.

I felt beat. Defeated.

Someone reminded me recently that faith shines brightest in the dark. For the next several days, while staying in my mom's assisted living apartment, God led me quickly out of my funk and into a place of solace and rest through the sheer act of encountering others.

The loneliness, the health issues, the plethora of struggles facing those I encountered, reminded me that God's place is not in the *absence* of suffering, but in the way we encounter those who *are* suffering. This, in return, acts as a salve on our own pain, for (the Loving Lord reminded me), it is in giving that we receive.