

Some of you have had the privilege of buying a brand new car. What a feeling! The car had hardly any miles on it, the interior didn't have ketchup or French fry stains on it, and the engine was dazzlingly clean. As you drove it off the lot, you had the sense that this car was not only great, it was faultless.

All of us have bought used cars, I'm sure. We recognized the faults of the car—dents, stains, a radio that didn't work. But we accepted the vehicle with its faults.

About five years after the cars were purchased, a funny thing happened. There was little difference between the cars. I'm not trying to persuade you to buy one or the other—just making an observation. Both the cars by this time had between 70,000 and 100,000 miles (or more). And with those miles came upkeep: tune-ups, oil changes, tires, windshield wipers, hoses, and headlights.

The sad truth is that all cars (and trucks and vans and SUV's) have a problem; they will break down eventually, no matter how well you have treated them. The cars don't want to do this; they don't mean to. But no matter what the intentions of the car, the problem is going to occur. They have a built-in tendency to fail over time, and it's rare that they don't meet this expectation.

Some people may try to fix the problems themselves, but the majority don't because of two problems—lack of the right tools, and lack of knowledge. They'd like to do it themselves to save the cost, but they lack the things needed to do the job. And that doesn't even touch on the issue of problems that are too immense to even think about fixing by one's self.

All of us mirror this break-down quality of our cars. We have a built-in tendency towards sin, and it's rare that we don't meet that reality. Romans 3:23 says that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We usually don't mean to sin; we don't want to sin in our heart of hearts. But it still happens, and much more regularly than we'd like.

Some of us try to fix it ourselves. But we find that we don't have the right tools or know-how. We don't know how to get rid of the guilt, or to mend the relationships we've wounded, or how to feel like we're back on God's good side. We might try promising to do better, or doing lots of good deeds, but we discover after a while that we still feel like that 100,000 mile car that needs repairs that we aren't capable of giving.

The best mechanic for our broken-down souls is the manufacturer. Only Jesus has the ability to fix the inherent flaws in our natures. Peter reminds the scribes and Pharisees, the ones who thought they knew how to fix everything spiritually, that "there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Jesus knows how to remove our guilt. He knows how to restore broken relationships, man to man and man to God. He asks us to meet with Him daily so that He can do preventative maintenance on us. He asks us to remember Him each time we meet together so we will remember to keep close to Him. He allowed His body to be beaten for our sins, and then shed His blood to fix what we never could.

There's a lot of quality used cars on the road today, but they don't stay quality by chance. Someone has taken the time to keep those cars in good running condition. With our spiritual lives, there is a partnership. Jesus did the hardest part through His sacrifice on Calvary. The ability to fix what was wrong in us was provided there. We are now called on to join with Christ in maintaining our spiritual lives through regular devotion and commitment to Him, part of which we do this morning as we partake of the loaf and the cup.

Prayer