

Preached by Carl Rush
Bush Hill Presbyterian Church
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Joshua 3: 7-17

GRACE ALONE - FAITH ALONE - SCRIPTURE ALONE

You can tell what's the most valuable in someone's life by the way they conduct themselves in the smallest of everyday moments. This morning, even though I had an extra hour, I was anxious to be here on time. I opened the door and climbed in my vehicle and noticed there was a note on my windshield. I thought, "Oh goodness, I've parked in an improper fashion. Somebody's going to be upset."

But I pulled the note out and it said, "Last night I noticed a woman in a white car backed into your vehicle. And before I could get her information, she drove off." They left their phone number and their name and their address for me to contact.

Whoever backed into my vehicle, it'll be OK. It's already got dents and scratches. Whoever did that, in that moment or realizing what happened, had to make a decision. And more than a value of being an honest, respectable upstanding citizen, I'm sure their behavior reflected fear of an insurance reprisal, or whatever.

Jesus challenges us to look at ourselves and say, "Are we behaving the way we behave so that others will think well of us or so that we can be faithful?"

Interesting. He doesn't tell them to ignore the scribes and the pharisees. In fact, he says do exactly what they're telling you to do. But be careful that you don't behave in the way that they behave.

What does *grace* mean for you? Does it mean finding someone in crisis this week and doing something to relieve their pain even though your crisis is bigger?

What does *faith* mean for you? Has the joy of your salvation dried up in all the concerns or doing church activities or has something else come between you and God that has displaced your spiritual center? Faith as a free gift has to elicit an inner joy that is indescribable.

And what has *scripture* come to mean to you? Is scripture something that we look at as an ancient document. When we understand it, we understand the parts we want to understand, anyway. And do we then go out and live any way that we choose? Is scripture the lamp to your foot—the light to your behavior, your security, and to your peace? Does scripture really guide your everyday approach to this life? Or do you spend more time practicing what works for you, and then

trying to make scripture fit your pattern of behavior?

Grace: receiving something we could never earn—God's love. Faith - the free gift from God for us. And scripture—it is still the way. And we are people of the way. And our way is different. It's different from what we would choose on our own, and it's certainly different than what this world will tell us is expedient.

Weren't you nervous when I told the kids to let someone break in line? Oh my! They might grow up to be a wimp. Or they might grow up to realize some things are more important than being right, than winning. Being at peace with themselves. Being strong inwardly is so much more important than defending ourselves against this world's bullies; or if they defeat us within, if we give in to our fears, that's the worst that can happen.

Let us live by grace. Let us live by faith. Let us be people of the book, of the way, now and always.

And let it begin now anew joyously at this meal for you.

Amen.