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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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The Danger of Righteousness

John 7:44-53

Prayer: *Father God, we do thank you for the incredible privilege that we have to gather together and to focus on you and the work you've done on our behalf at the cross. Father, we just thank you for calling us to remember this day especially. We pray for a special outflow of your grace, we pray for your Holy Spirit, we pray for your insight and ability to glean from your word more and deeper insights as to what it is you've done for us, and how we should respond. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as you know it's, again, the first Sunday of the month, and this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he gathered his disciples for one last Passover meal, and Matthew 26:26 describes it, it says: *Now as we were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the*

forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and blood and then he instructed his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood, and then he asked them to repeat the remembrance of His sacrifice on a regular basis and this is what we call the Lord's table. We here celebrate it once a month, and we do that by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us, by examining our consciences, asking the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by confessing our sins and then by partaking in the elements. John 6:53 says this: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Now, we've been following the life of Jesus, we've worked our way thus far to the end of the seventh chapter of the Gospel of John. There we find Jesus, he's at the Feast of Tabernacles, and he's making an amazing offer to the crowd. The priest is pouring out the water symbolizing the thirst that the Jews had in the desert, and Jesus stands up and he cries out to this crowd, and it was a huge assembled crowd from all over Israel that gathered for this feast, and Jesus announces to the crowd, he shouts out in John 7:37: *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever*

believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

Now, I pointed out last time the impossibility of everyone in that crowd understanding what Jesus was saying without God first opening up their eyes and their ears. In the middle of this feast, Jesus simply stands up and announces to the crowds that he is the answer to all of their thirst. And we know what he meant by that. Jesus had previously said in Matthew 5:6: *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."* But only a small fraction of that crowd understood that. So the crowd's reaction would have been exactly what it was like for the woman at the well. If you remember a few months before, we had the story of this woman of kind of questionable repute who Jesus meets at a well in Sychar and there Jesus offers this woman this same living water. She thinks he's referring to physical thirst. She thinks he has some kind of access to unlimited water that would free her up to be able to get water whenever she wanted and she wouldn't have to meet there on a daily basis. She's basically incapable of drawing a spiritual connection to this water without this direct intervention by Jesus. And there's a reason to think that everyone in the crowd that day would have responded the exact same way to Jesus' offer of living water. Now, here's a man who was claiming to take care of our thirst forever. You know, how

could those people in the crowd possibly know even what kind of thirst Jesus was referring to? See, only those who understood that that thirst was a thirst for God himself, they were the ones who could have responded to that offer. I said last time that that thirst itself is a gift and it's gift that God bestows as he wills, and without that thirst, there's no desire for water. It is God who supplies the desire. Now, God did that for some; he didn't do that for most. John 7:40 says this, it says: *Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him.*

So Jesus makes his offer and it divides the crowd. And like I said last time, you basically have in the same three responses in the crowd that we have even now today. You know, there's the religious response: "This really is the Prophet." There's the unbelieving response: *"Is the Christ to come from Galilee?"* And there's the response of those who have been given the gift of thirst. Verse 41 says: *Others said, "This is the Christ."* Now, scripture doesn't give us a breakdown of the percentages of those who believe but we have it on good authority that those who said: *"This is the*

Christ," well, they had to be a very small minority. God says in Matthew 7:13: "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

This morning we're going to finish up the seventh chapter of John's Gospel, and we're going to look at the responses of the many. We're going to take a look at the dark side of the responses that Jesus received, because God has them in his word and God has them in his word for our profit so that we can benefit even from those who reject the light and embrace the darkness. And so the first question we would have to ask ourselves is why. Why would they do that? Who are such people and why would they do something so foolish? Well, the answer is: They are you and me. They are every one of us who is outside the grace of God, who without his marvelous intervention would be walking down that very same path. And I don't say this for any other reason than to emphasize the complete and utter inability we have to claim any single molecule of our salvation as something we in any remote way deserve, something we have earned. I've said many times in the past that the devil has a playbook for each and every one of us, and that playbook includes believers as well. We are born as children of wrath. We are born dead set against God and his ways, and we

embrace the unrighteousness of sin and we spend our days in overt and covert rebellion against God and his kingdom, and you know the devil knows that. The devil knows that and he exploits that. He knows it's not very hard to get sinners to sin. I mean, it's what they do naturally. But when we become children of the kingdom, when we become the children of the light, understand that the devil does not give up his playbook. He just substitutes a different one. And for believers, the very righteousness we pursue can become the very thing that the devil uses to tempt us with. Instead of understanding that our righteousness comes from solely from Christ and is the product of grace and grace alone, we begin to appropriate Christ's righteousness as our own. You know, we start thinking, well, compared to "those people," we're not so bad. That is what the devil delights in. And if we fall for that temptation, we wind up far worse off than the very wicked ones we were comparing ourselves to.

And Jesus once said these words to a group of Pharisees who had challenged him. He said this in Matthew 21:31, he said: *"Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterwards change your minds and believe him."* You know,

the religious leaders should have been the very first ones to grasp what that way of righteousness was all about. That sacrificial system that they were part of in the Old Testament painted a vivid picture of the fact that God was holy and that we were not. And the ten commandments that he gave us were there to prove the demands of his perfection were way, way beyond our ability to comply. In fact, we all know we couldn't even get past the first one: *"You shall have no other gods before me."* So we can't even get past the first one, let alone the other nine. So if anyone should have been conscious of the failure of their own righteousness, it should have been the religious leaders who participated in the sacrifice of these innocent animals in order to cover their own guilt. You see, God's provision of the blood of a sacrificed animal was a picture pointing towards the day when the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, would come to offer his blood as the final solution to their unrighteousness. Their thirst was a picture of that unrighteousness and their response to Jesus offered to address the thirst was to insist that they just were not thirsty. And if they were thirsty, they had their own water, thank you. See, righteousness itself was standing in their midst as the very source of righteousness, who would by faith in his sacrifice forever supply the perfection that they never could. They would only have to admit that they had none. And this is precisely where the enemy sets his playbook in motion for good people, for moral

people, the ones who somehow think that by keeping all the rules we would have something somehow to offer God in return for our salvation. Jesus blew that whole notion to pieces by the way he lived his life, by flawlessly living out his life in their midst, and the contrast was not good for the Pharisees. Jesus' perfection was real. Theirs was phony and it was self-evident to everyone except themselves. But his righteousness was there for the asking. They just never asked. And so Jesus warned his people in Matthew 5:20: *"For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Now, back at the feast, Jesus comes to that feast as the living embodiment of the rock that Moses struck when he was in the desert, the rock that gushed out this lifesaving water. And he's likening their thirst, their need for righteousness to a physical need, a physical thirst for water. And he says again in John 7:37: *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"* First he points out to them their thirst and then he says I alone am the one who can satisfy it. But you see, all they could see in that offer was an insult to their vaulted sense of their own righteousness, and they deeply resented him.

We're at the end of John's Gospel, and at this stage the religious leaders have reached the point where they're actively trying to secure his arrest. This is John 7:44, it says: *Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!"* You know what I love about their response? What I love about this response is that it shows that God is no respecter of persons. I mean, it's not a Pharisee, it's not a scribe, it's not a priest, it's not even any of the regular members of the crowd who have obviously had their eyes opened. It is a group of people even more shocking and surprising than the tax collectors and the prostitutes. It's members of the temple guard, people who have been sent to arrest him. And so they return to the Pharisees and the Pharisees are furious that they've come back empty-handed, and they demand an explanation. Verse 46: *The officers answered: "No one ever spoke like this man!"* Well, we know what he said. He said: *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*

So the question is how is it that they understood what he was saying? Let me take you to Matthew 11:15-19. Again, this is Jesus' words. He says this, he says: *"He who has ears to hear,*

let him hear. But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.'" Do you hear what Jesus is saying here? What he's saying about the ability to hear, he's describing people who are acting like little kids. I mean, not just any kind of little kids, he's describing people who are acting like viciously spoiled children. It doesn't matter what kind of game you're going to come up with, they're just not going to play. And you know, the vast majority of the people that we know, the people walking up and down those streets, the people right in downtown in Wal-Mart, everyone that you see, the ones who hear the words that we've heard, well, they're no different than children in the marketplace. They are determined to reject God no matter what approach he takes. You know, John the Baptist emphasized the law. They said he had a demon. Jesus emphasized grace, and they said he was a drunk and a glutton. See, what Jesus knew is that with most of the world, he couldn't win for losing. He knew that there was nothing he could say to the world that they would even want to hear. Now, when you actually heard the gospel, you heard something

with different ears. That's not because you and I are particularly brilliant or insightful but because God has mercy on whom he will have mercy. See, the religious leaders on the other hand, they thought of themselves as brilliant and particularly insightful when in reality they were tone deaf and legally blind. That's why Jesus once said in Matthew 11:25: *"I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to children."* Now, the "little children" in this particular case, they just happened to be the temple guard, the very soldiers who were sent to arrest Jesus.

As the elders begin distributing the bread, I would like us to take some time to just consider the privilege you have, consider the ears that hear, the eyes that see, the thirst that you have, consider the privilege you have of being one of these little children. As the bread is being distributed, I want you to consider also this warning that God gives in 1 Corinthians 11:28. He says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* You know, I say this every

time, I say communion is extremely serious business, and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. You know, if you are not absolutely confident that you are a child of God, when those elements come to you, just pass them by and nobody's going to give you a hard time, nobody's going to look at you, nobody's going to think somebody's odd or strange. In fact, they will think you are wise.

I also point out on the other hand that we can make the mistake of thinking that unless we are spotlessly perfect, we are unworthy to receive communion, and that, too, is a mistake the devil loves to have you make. See, being a child of the King doesn't mean that we do not sin and that we never fall. What it means is that when we do fall, we are aware that we have sinned because God has placed his Holy Spirit within us convicting us. And so we grieve as children who have a Father who longs to forgive us, who longs to cleanse us. God says in 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King doesn't mean we are without sin. It means that when we sin, we understand we have an advocate with the Father. 1 John 2:1 says this: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* And so because we have Jesus' righteousness and not

our own, we are free to eat from his table. So if you love your Lord, do not deny yourself the privilege that Jesus has purchased you -- for you. And if you are his child, appreciate the privilege he's given you of thirst.

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter, the 23rd verse says this, it says: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* Take, and eat.

It has been pointed out that when it comes to grasping the gospel, Jesus often times distinguishes between being childish and childlike. There's a huge difference. To be childlike is to accept by faith those truths that God tells us that are absolutely difficult to grasp. To be childish is to be like those children in the marketplace. It's to refuse to accept truths no matter how clearly it is presented. I want you to listen to how the Pharisees responded to the childlike faith that the officers demonstrated. This is verse 47, it says: *The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."* You talk about a childish response. What they're saying is Jesus is absolutely unacceptable, not because we can

prove him false or deceptive but only because we find him unacceptable. We call that circular logic. You know, have any of us religious big shots believed in him? No. Since we have the final word, well, that's all you need to know. We don't accept him because we don't accept him, and that should be enough. You know, the last time I tried that line of argument, I think I was in the sixth grade. But you know it gets worse. They go on to say in verse 49: *"But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."* They're saying these people who believe in Jesus are so ignorant of our law that they are obviously cursed. I mean, they should have rejected Jesus just because we said so, even though we said so with no appeal to any law whatsoever. Well, enter Nicodemus, the only Pharisee who recognizes the absurdity of this childishness. John says in verse 50: *Nicodemus, who had gone to him -- that's Jesus, Nicodemus had gone to Jesus before, Nicodemus -- who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?"* Hear what Nicodemus is saying. He says fellas, if you want to talk about the law, you might not want to be breaking it like you're breaking it right now. He says in verse 51: *"Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?"* Their childishness has been exposed. Nicodemus politely and respectfully points out the obvious, but the response he gets is typical once

again of children in the marketplace. Verse 52 says: *They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee."* Well, first of all, they were factually incorrect. In fact, the prophet Jonah came from Galilee, so they who prided themselves on their knowledge of the law didn't even have their facts straight; and second, they didn't even know because they didn't want to know that Jesus wasn't from Galilee. He was from Bethlehem. Matthew 2:1 says: *After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived unexpectedly in Jerusalem.* And the Scripture was clear that the Messiah was going to be born in Bethlehem. Matthew 2:6 says: *"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah: because out of you will come a leader who will shepherd My people Israel."* The chapter ends with basically everybody just kind of slinking away. Verse 53 says: *They went each to his own house.*

So what was God showing us by letting us see the dark side of the responses he got in his offer to quench all thirst? Well, as the elders come forward to distribute the cup, let me list three things: Number one, to be childlike is to accept by faith those things about God that we can't fully understand. So understand that God tells us that we see through a glass darkly. We are incapable of grasping what it cost God to leave heaven itself, to

enter into human existence, to fulfill entirely the demands of the law and then to have the very people that you are serving turn on you and slaughter you as a sacrifice. You have to have a measure of childlike faith to even take in a truth that deep. To be childish is to reject that truth out of hand, no matter how compelling it may be. And secondly, God chooses those whom he wishes to choose and he scatters them throughout all different kinds of people. You know, among those who actually heard Jesus in the crowd were those who were perhaps the most unlikely. It was the temple guard. It was they who said: *"No one ever spoke like this man!"* And yet even among the Pharisees who God gives us as the worst example of childish blind rebellion that refuses to seek truth, we have right in their midst Nicodemus, a Pharisee, who first went to Jesus secretly at night because God had begun the process of opening up his eyes and his ears. And we see in this text Nicodemus struggling to break away from his peers. We see in his question to the Pharisees that he's already struggling to reconcile the truth that God is placing within him with the lies and the deception of his peers. We all know that Nicodemus went on to embrace the truth of who Christ was. In fact, our text this morning hints at that. In verse 50, it says: *Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them.* Now, after Jesus died on the cross, there were only two men -- two, who had the courage to approach the authorities about Jesus' body, and

Nicodemus was one of them. John 19 says this, it says: *After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus -- but secretly because of his fear of the Jews -- asked Pilate that he might remove Jesus' body. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and took the body away. Nicodemus (who had previously come to Him at night) also came, bringing a mixture of about 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes.*

And thirdly, as I said for believers, the very righteousness we pursue can become the very thing that the devil uses to tempt us with. God wants us to see just how deadly and blinding self-righteousness can be. In his book *"Defiant Grace,"* Pastor Dane Ortlund makes this statement, he says, "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking you do." We need to repeat that until it really sinks in. "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." So let us one again examine ourselves, ask yourself how many times you thought you were qualified just a little bit for the kingdom of God. Maybe just a little more qualified than the next. I know I've been guilty of that many times. We need to confess that before God. We need to thank him for his grace that reaches out to us even when we think we are qualified. Nothing to thy throne I

bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

1 Corinthians 11, the 25th verse says this: *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."* So take and drink.

This is the part that I call heads, heart and feet. This is the time where we practically attempt to remember Christ and his sacrifice in a way that plays itself out in our every day life. It's not just up here in our head but it's somewhere in how we live out our lives. And I want to take some time this morning to talk about two different women because they are a practical application of our text. One of them is Miley Cyrus. Oh, boy, the heads all just went up at that. Boy. And one of them is the singer Joan Baez. Their stories perfectly frame the Scripture that we've been talking about.

I know everybody knows all about Miley Cyrus, and we all know that she's transformed herself from Hannah Montana into some kind of incarnation of Madonna. It's amazing to watch the very people who are so quick to decry censorship and so in favor of venues like MTV are now, they're the ones leading the charge against the vulgarity and the lewdness, and it was vulgar and it was lewd in what Miley

Cyrus did. I mean, I heard enough about it so that I didn't go near watching it, but I saw some still pictures of it and they were outrageous. And so the question is: How do we respond to Miley Cyrus, particularly since she has very publicly claimed that she is a Christian? Well, listen to what Galatians 6:1-4 says, it says: *Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit --* here's the part we need to look at -- *watching out for yourselves so you also won't be tempted.* What kind of temptation is he talking about? Well, what we have been speaking about this morning is exactly the temptation he is speaking about. You need to forgive me if I think that Miley Cyrus is really here to serve a societal purpose. The big brouhaha about Miley Cyrus is because Miley Cyrus is here to make us feel good about ourselves. You see, when you see somebody going way over the top or over the edge, you can point to that person as bad and we can think of ourselves in relative terms in relation to her as not so bad or at least better than she is. That's the devil's playbook for us. That's what he's got reserved for us. And when you have a culture that is so rapidly descending into the blatant wickedness that ours is, you have a need for a scapegoat, someone to take the pressure off me and my own personal wickedness, someone people can point to and feel good that they are not them. That's why the Scripture says: *Watch out for yourselves so you also won't be tempted.*

You know, this past week I also, I saw a show, on PBS they have a show called American Masters which is an excellent show, just talks about people who have mastered whatever it is they are doing, and they focused this week on Joan Baez. Now, for those of you who are younger, you're probably -- who the heck is Joan Baez? That will really tell an age group here. She is a superb folk singer, one of the -- probably the premiere interpreter of Bob Dillon's music -- I should tell Leon, he would really appreciate the work that she's done on Dillon's music. But what I did not realize when I saw the show is that in many ways not only did she talk the talk, but she also walked the walk. Politically you probably well know she was way, way over on the left, but what I didn't realize is that she routinely risked her life in the civil rights movement in Vietnam, in Cambodia, in Thailand, in Bosnia, in many of the other places where she saw injustice, she just went there to protest that injustice. In some ways she was IJM before there was an IJM. And like I said, she's an incredible singer. Well, I was watching this program and there was a very jarring scene that just caught my -- it arrested my attention. She was setting up on the streets of Sarajevo, a busy street, she put a chair down, took out her guitar and as people are walking back and forth, they were filming her, and she started to sing, and she sang Amazing Grace. She sang this, she sang: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a

soul like me." I don't know if it's just me or if it's jarring -- there's something missing there. There's a word that has been changed. She changed the lyrics. In fact, she changed that one word of the song and that one change was so jarring because it was so unexpected and because, to me, it was so obvious. I mean, of all people who would respect the integrity of the author of a song, I would expect Joan Baez to. My fear is that as much as she loved that song, she hated that one word in the song. She changed the word "wretch" in that song to the word "soul." I mean, we saw it this morning. We know what the song is as John Newton wrote it, says: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see." I have absolutely no idea spiritually where Joan Baez is, but what is so striking and so dangerous to me, particularly among people who have spent a good portion of their lives doing good, being moral, is the aversion to using the word "wretch." I'd be the very first one to applaud her courage, her integrity, and her willingness to put her money where her mouth is, but I would also insist that before God every one of us deserves the title "wretch," because none of us including Joan Baez is flawless. Only Jesus Christ was. And only Jesus Christ could offer up his perfect life. The only one in the entire universe to whom the title "wretch" would never apply, became the person of ultimate wretchedness for our sakes. And because of Christ, I stand

justified before God. Because of Christ, I am perfected, not because I am sinless but because my sins have been fully paid for by Jesus Christ. And because of Christ, I have his righteousness instead of my own. There's nothing more dangerous than even a hint of self-righteousness for believers, and we of all people know that before God on our own, we have none.

You know, I would venture to say, if I had to choose, I think I would rather be in Miley Cyrus' shoes. Jesus says in Luke 5:32: *"The healthy don't need a doctor, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* And you know, the chances are pretty good that with all of the hubbub and outrage, that Miley Cyrus just might have a chance of discovering that she is spiritually sick; and she is. I pray that she makes that discovery. I pray also that Joan Baez might realize that she, like every one of us, is also sick and literally dying of thirst. Jesus came eternally to quench that thirst, and I pray that both of them discover or rediscover His living water.

Father God, I do thank you that your word contains the lessons we need to live out our life, and your word this time contains a warning to us. Lord, we look at the Pharisees and we see how could they think in such a childish way, how could they think in a logic that is so primitive, how could they even respond as they did, and

yet, Lord, we recognize that it is so easy to begin to appear self-righteous, to take just a little bit of that righteousness that belongs to you and you alone and to appropriate it for ourselves. Father, I pray that as we look at the cross, we see our complete and utter wretchedness, and as we look beyond the cross we see that we are made perfect, that we stand righteous not because of ourselves but because of what your Son has done for us. Bless Him; praise Him. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.