

“Christianity is Offensive”

My first two years of college were at Northwestern College in Watertown, WI. At that time in our synod’s history the pastor training college and the teacher training college were different schools in different states. Northwestern College, the pastor training college, had an all-male student body. So for football and basketball you had male cheerleaders. One of the cheers that I remember was when our football team or basketball team was on offense. The cheerleaders would fire up the crowd with their cheer, “Let’s be offensive! As they repeatedly chanted those words they would lift their arms to expose their smelly hairy armpits. As you can imagine, the humor of an all-male student body was unique. Some people didn’t find it amusing, but rather offensive. The teachings of the Bible are unique and they are meant to be an earthly and eternal blessing to us. Unfortunately, not everyone feels Christianity is a blessing. Many people feel Christianity is offensive. Let’s explore that idea here today and talk about how that impacts each of our lives. Listen to John 6:51-69.

⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." ⁵²Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" ⁵³Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." ⁵⁹He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

⁶⁰On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" ⁶¹Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you?" ⁶²What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. ⁶⁴Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."

⁶⁶From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. ⁶⁷You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Jesus wasn’t and isn’t trying to be offensive with his words here, but he did and does offend people with his words. And it’s not just these words, but many words that are found in the Bible. For many people there are teachings of the Bible that feel like Jesus is raising his arms to expose his smelly hairy armpits as he chants “Let’s be offensive! Let’s be offensive!” And it’s not just non-Christian people who are offended by some of the teachings in the Bible, it’s Christian people who are offended. And

sometimes those Christian people are you and me. None of us should be shocked that Christianity is offensive to sin tainted human reason.

- Some people are offended by the teaching that the Bible is God's inspired Word that contains no mistakes, applies to every generation of people, and should not be added to or subtracted from.
- Some people are offended by how God reveals himself in Scripture as the one and only true God, a Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Some people are offended that Jesus states that he is true God.
- Some people are offended by the exclusiveness of Christianity – the confession that Christianity is the only religion that leads to Heaven and that all non-Christian religions lead to Hell. That's really the point Jesus is making in our sermon lesson for today.
- Some people are offended by the teaching of grace – that the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation in Heaven is not earned by the good things we do, but rather is 100% a gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ. This is another point that Jesus is making in our sermon lesson for today.
- Some people are offended by the teaching of Heaven and Hell.
- Some people are offended by the teaching of creation - that evolution is not the reason for our existence, but rather God created the universe from nothing in six 24 hour days.
- Some people are offended by the third commandment, that God says it is beneficial for you to make it a weekly priority (above rest, work, and recreation) to gather with other Christians for worship and Bible study.
- Some people are offended by the fourth commandment, that God says those he has placed in authority over you are his representatives and a blessing.
- Some people are offended by the fifth commandment, that God says he wants us to protect life and that it's his responsibility to begin and end life.
- Some people are offended by the sixth commandment, that God says it is best for society and you if his design for marriage is followed – that living together companionship, sex, and children should take place between one man and one woman after that couple has committed themselves to each other for life in marriage.
- Some people are offended by the seventh commandment, that God says he considers it stealing if we keep our time, talents, and money just for ourselves and aren't willing to share those gifts to help others and to support the work of telling others about Jesus our Savior.
- Some people are offended by the teaching that believing in the Bible and in Jesus as Savior is something God the Holy Spirit enables us to do and not something we have the power to do on our own.
- Some people are offended by the teaching that being a Christian means my life will be harder in some ways, not easier.
- And while Jesus maybe is alluding to Holy Communion in our sermon lesson for today, he wouldn't institute it for another two years. Some people are offended by the teaching of Holy Communion that it is the true body and blood of Jesus that is received and that Holy Communion isn't for everyone, but rather those who are properly prepared to receive it.
- Some people are offended by many other things that God says in the Bible.

Christianity is offensive to sin tainted human reason. But it is also true that sin tainted human reason is offensive to God. Humans are offended by God and God is offended by sinful human beings. The amazing thing, however, is how an offended God reacts to offensive humans. **“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day”** (John 6:54). Feast on (believe) the good

news that God went on the offensive to deal with all your offensive sins. Feast on (believe) the good news that Jesus suffered the eternal punishment of Hell on the cross for all of your offenses so you won't ever have to. Feast on (believe) the good news that a better life, an eternal life, in Heaven awaits you because of your Holy Spirit worked connection to Jesus in faith. Feast on (believe) the good news that physical death is not the end for you, but just a temporary sleep that you will be raised from on Judgment Day.

At the end of the day, there stands Jesus, abandoned by many and followed by few, saying things that are offensive to our sin tainted human reason. One can go through life being offended by God, but what a miserable and eternally dangerous way to go through life. Instead, knowing what we know about how God went on the offensive and took care of our offensive sins for eternity through Jesus work, let's adopt the approach of famous 1800's Christian evangelist, Dwight Moody, founder of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. One day a person asked him to explain a difficult section/teaching of Scripture. Dwight Moody responded by saying, "I can't explain it." The person followed up by asking, "Well, how do you understand it?" Dwight Moody responded by saying, "I can't understand it." Trying again the person asked, "Well, what do you make of it?" Dwight Moody answered, "I don't make anything of it." Finally, the frustrated person asked "what do you do with it?" Dwight Moody responded, "I simply believe it." Christianity is offensive, sometimes even to Christians like us. Yet instead of being offended, let's simply believe what the Bible says. The Apostle Peter had his struggles with this and often put his foot in his mouth. Yet in our sermon lesson for today Peter is spot on with his words and we will never be put to shame if we follow his example and adopt Peter's confession as our own. **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."**(John 6:68-69). Amen.