Wow, this text has been a challenge for me this week. And the reason for that is that it just took me a while to be able to admit and acknowledge that Jesus here was being offensive. I mean we aren’t a Jewish culture, but even for us when you read this its’ like you squirm a little bit. But for these people, these comments would have been deeply offensive, just crazy kind of offensive. A direct violation of “what the Bible says”. And this isn’t the first time that Jesus broke laws or spoke in a way that offended people. Today, in our lesson, a bunch of disciples get offended and leave. Because they could grasp that God might come to them in a form they found offensive.

This is a popular move isn’t it? To get offended and leave. I remember one time in my first call an older man who came to church and always sat in the same place. Well one day he showed up and there was a family sitting in his spot. So he said, “That’s my seat”. Of course they moved. But they also never came back. They got offended, and just left.

For some people that’s all it takes. Just that fragile. You can get a bad meal at a place and you’re offended and that’s it. And it’s rigid and fast and complete. I’ll never be back. This is pretty common in the church these days. The pastor says something, that’s it, I’m done, or the ELCA comes out with a social statement, or passes a resolution that somebody doesn’t like, and a bunch of people get offended and leave. And I assume that here in our text today, it is exactly the same kind of thing. These disciples been with Jesus for a while, and it was great, but then one day he offended them, and that was it. And I assume that they will all tell their friends about how terrible Jesus was. He said we should eat his flesh and drink his blood! I’m so offended. He doesn’t believe what the Bible says. So familiar. I’m not in a band anymore, but in the last band I was in, this was the template for how people left. One argument, and that was it.

You know I think this is increasingly defining our American culture. We are a culture of the offended now. And what’s interesting about it is that being offended I think is a way to have status. It makes you important. Being offended now means that I’m on the side of the right. I’m on the side of good. Every night on the news the anchors and commentators tell us how offended we ought to be, and they themselves are so outraged. Like wow, I’m proud of myself for being so irritable and resentful.

And then that’s the basis of what we call cancel culture now isn’t it? Forget you. All of this carries a great deal of status and importance, this business of cancelling. And it’s exactly what happens in our text today. Jesus offends some of his disciples. And what happens? He just gets cancelled. Isn’t that interesting. God comes to them in a form they find offensive. But there is no recognition at all that God comes to his people in that exact way. Do you think that its that different today? For you? Are you open to the possibility that God may be coming to you in something you find offensive?

That’s the lesson. That’s the message. Jesus comes to them in a form they find offensive. They have not yet grasped the message of the cross. From the very beginning of Jesus story it’s there. The throne of our king is a cattle trough. A friend of tax and collectors and sinners. Crucified on a cross. Breaking the rules of their cherished traditions. All of these things turned everything they knew about God upside down.

Today we hear Jesus saying what he offers is his flesh and blood. Eat it, he says. And it’s sort of like he saying, “chew on this”. Chew on my flesh and blood. Think about it. Chew on that which makes me human. That’s what makes me real. God in the flesh says, God comes to us in human form. Not just 2000 years ago, but today. God comes to us in the people around us. Chew on that. And that is always a little offensive I think. We would rather have God up in heaven, sort of dispensing blessings. But God’s power and glory, is the way he is made known in flesh and blood. You know that very real neighbor for example. That indeed is hard. Who can accept it? We tend to want a God who comes to us in a some kind of supernatural way. Rather than our common and ordinary neighbor.

Jesus gets the offense. They would much rather Jesus be a God perhaps who was sort of superhuman. More God than Human. Does this offend you?” he says. Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?” It’s remarkable…because Jesus is saying something like, “Would you rather that I wasn’t so human? Would you rather that I go back and sit up on a throne somewhere up in the sky? Maybe I can go back to being the man upstairs again. The God you are used to. The God who gives you commands to follow. Would you prefer that? That I was maybe more God than Human? I know the creed says that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God. But that’s not “up there”. It’s always in human form.

This offense that God comes to us in that which is most human is interesting indeed. The first thing that came to my mind when I thought about it, was the reality of looking at myself in the mirror. You ever done that? You can only do that for so long, until you begin to feel a little uncomfortable. A little too human and a little too real. But that’s my flesh and blood. That’s me at my most human. That’s the form God chooses to come to us in. The other day I went in to Wal mart in Beatrice and as I turned the corner there was this guy, you know that guy with the sign that said, “homeless, need help”. And I don’t know if he needed help or not really, but there’s always that feeling that comes with someone asking like that. And this guy was offensive looking, It’s like ew, and you try to get past it as fast as you can. Just cancel this as fast as possible. Or just ignore it. But to listen to Jesus would be to understand that hidden in this man was the presence of God in the world. That can be somewhat offensive, or at least uncomfortable to contemplate.

And what is more human than to have different points of view? Masks and vaccines and people who speak about racism and equal rights and what about the war in Afghanistan or transgender or all the rest. What do we do with our text today that seems to suggest that God is coming to us in that which at offends. What is more human than all of our disagreements. Indeed these can offend us. But what if we began to see that this very thing may be the form that God comes to us in. So another offends me, for some reason. What if I saw this as an opportunity, not to just leave, but to come into the presence of God. What if when I was offended at someone I began to think that maybe here in this disagreement, this all too human thing, that Jesus might come to me? What if my response to being offended wasn’t just to leave or cancel, or divide?

What is more offensive than the cross of Jesus Christ? But that is how God came to us. But there, he took all of that broken humanity and began to turn it into a gift. He didn’t leave in a huff. He stayed and stayed with it. And somehow that cross that offensive thing began to turn into something new. You don’t think that could happen with a mask controversy, or a transgender debate if when people got offended, they did something different than just get mad and leave, or divide, or get nasty? IWhat if we saw it as an opportunity for faith instead. Jesus transformed that which was offensive into to an abundant life. Do you think he could do it now? You don’t even have to do anything. Just when you’re offended begin to think of it as God knocking on the door, rather than an opportunity to grandstand. Because how you respond could make all the difference.

No wonder that Jesus says, “for this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father. Who can believe that God shows up in a form that may offend me? Interesting how our lesson ends today. It’s down to 12. Jesus has offended all the rest. So he asks them, “do you also wish to leave?” For some reason they don’t. They respond to being offended, by believing that somehow that’s how God comes to us. It transforms how we see the world and the mess that’s it’s in. And helps us to see that there is another response than simply rejecting it. Perhaps we might love it, and our n

eighbor as Jesus did. Amen.