

The Irresistible Revolution  
*Living As an Ordinary Radical*  
6 pm Thursdays, March 7 – April 11  
Meeting at St. Andrew Episcopal Church

Session Four – March 28  
Chapters 8-9

**Ch 8 – Jesus Made Me Do It!**

In the face of accusations that he is being cavalier with his life. That Jesus would want him to respect his life and be safe- Shane wonders why people would think this, given the track record of Jesus, his disciples, and the early church. He then differentiates between being scared and fear. Being scared when things are scary is normal, letting yourself be ruled by fear stops us from doing what love requires. “I had a college professor who said, ‘All around you, people will be tiptoeing through life, just to arrive at death safely. But dear children, do not tiptoe. Run, hop, skip, or dance, just do not tiptoe.’” P276

“I’m not sure where we get the notions that Christianity is safe or that Christians should play it cool. Growing up, I always thought that Christians were good upstanding citizens, but the more I get to know Jesus, the more trouble he seems to get me into. Soren Kierkegaard puts it well” To want to admire, instead of follow, Christ is not an invention of bad people; no it is more an invention of those who spinelessly want to keep themselves detached at a safe distance from Jesus.” P217

He points out that scriptures tell us not to fear what can damage the body, but only what can damage the soul. Shane says for him that means he fears the suburbs more

than the inner city. Demonic Forces: numbness, complacency, comfort. We are not called to be safe, but that God will hold us in times of danger, and that being held by God is the best place for a Christian. “Perhaps the most dangerous place for a Christian to be is in safety and comfort.” P218

Everything has become so stale now, and we’re supposed to fear Hell. But what should really make one shudder isn’t hell but God, “Because I have no idea what God is going to dare me to do next.”

Following Jesus isn’t cool. It means giving up the in-crowd and hanging out with the not-so-cool, “the people sitting alone, folks who talk to themselves, and have a distinct odor.” Shane has learned to beware the things that are ‘cool and normal’.

“As French Theologian Jacques Ellul once said, ‘Christians should be troublemakers, creators of uncertainty, agents of a dimension incompatible with society.’ After all, we follow one who certainly had lots of adjectives attached to his reputation, but cool was not among them...

“Philadelphia had begun to pass anti-homeless legislation, making it illegal to sleep in the parks, illegal to ask for money,

illegal to lie down on sidewalks. (They even chose to implement it on Dr. King's birthday!)... Love park was a place where homeless folks hung out. It was visible, safe, and central. Folks knew they could go there to give out food or clothing... One of the city's boldest moves was passing an ordinance that banned all food from the park. Specifically it reads All Persons Must Cease and Desist From Distributing Food... About a hundred of us gathered in love park... we celebrated communion... we continued breaking the bread by bringing pizzas... we slept overnight in the park with our homeless friends... And then one night... the police circled the park and arrested all of us." P223

"We decided to be represented by a homeless friend... so our buddy Fonz agreed to be our spokesperson. As we stood before the judge, I wore a shirt that read, 'Jesus was homeless.' The judge asked me to step forward, and I did. He read my shirt aloud and said, Hmmm. I didn't know that. I said, Yes sir, in the scriptures Jesus says that foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.

The judge paused pensively and said, 'you just might stand a chance'

Before we went to court, we read all the scriptures where Jesus warns the disciples that they will be dragged before courts and into jails, and they had a new meaning for us. He warned them not to worry about what to say, so we didn't... The district attorney had her stuff together. She was not joking around. We faced numerous charges, jail time, thousands of dollars in fines, and hours and hours of community service...

The judge said to the court, 'what is in

question here is not whether these folks broke the law, that is quite clear. What is in question is the constitutionality of the law.' The DA shot back, 'The constitutionality of the law is not before this court.'... the Judge retorted, 'The constitutionality of the law is before every court. Let me remind the court that if it weren't for people who broke unjust laws, we wouldn't have the freedom that we have. We'd still have slavery. That's the story of this country, from the Boston tea party to the civil rights movement. These people are not criminals, they are freedom fighters. I find them all not guilty, on every charge.'" P225

That was over 10 years ago, "Those same laws resurfaced again recently, so pray that we get the same judge... People came out of the woodwork to protest this ordinance. And it was incredible to see people of faith take a courageous stand against injustice... one older Pentecostal woman said, 'Fifteen years ago God told me to start making casseroles and taking them out to the street to share with the homeless. I haven't missed a week in fifteen years. If the mayor wants to stop that, then the mayor better talk to God, 'cause he started it all.'" A Catholic said it violated his religious freedom citing Matthew 25, and a judge backed that up, saying that the law was a violation of religious freedom. But laws have proliferated across the US in cities against helping the homeless. In Atlanta a movement for public toilets began because the homeless were being arrested for not using a restroom, when none existed.

"[Jesus] said, 'If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first... In this world you will have trouble. But take heart!

I have overcome the world! (John 15:18; 16:33)”

“And of course, Forgive Us Our Trespasses has a new ring to it when you’re sitting in jail charged with defiant trespassing.” P227

Coming back from the Bahamas Shane is stopped in the airport and interrogated so long he misses his plane, the same thing repeats the next day. Once he flies home he is met by 2 Dept of Homeland Security officers who interrogate him again. “I kid you not, they opened up a thick file with my name on it. I could see pictures and articles and pieces of the Simple Way website. And we talked... I really do think they were just being overly cautious, since

apparently some of the 9/11 terrorists had gone through the Bahamas... But I’ve started to read some more parts of the scriptures a little differently now. When the Bible speaks of ‘principalities and powers,’ I used to think about demons and exorcisms. But when you look a little closer, it reads, ‘For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil. (Eph. 6:12) I know a few good police officers and a couple DHS officers well enough to see that they are not the enemy. But there is something going on in the world, and very real powers stand in the way of God’s spirit.” P231

## Ch 9 – Jesus is for Losers

Shane begins with the story of a homeless man who insists he isn’t a Christian because he doesn’t have his stuff together and have things figured out. Shane shares the stories of the Pharisees, the ones who seem to have everything figured out, and Jesus’ response, ‘I have come not to call the righteous, but the sinner.’ “The gospel is good news for sick people and disturbing news or those who think they’ve got it all together. Some of us have been told our whole lives that we are wretched, but the gospel reminds us that we are beautiful. Others of us have been told our whole lives that we are beautiful, but the gospel reminds us that we are also wretched.” P235

“Christianity can be built around isolating ourselves from evil doers and sinners, creating a community of religious piety and

moral purity. That’s the Christianity I grew up with. Christianity can also be built around joining with the broken sinners and evildoers of our world crying out for God... That’s the Christianity I have fallen in love with... Jesus tells a parable: “Two people went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself with these words, ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like everyone else—crooks, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of everything I receive.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He wouldn’t even lift his eyes to look toward heaven. Rather, he struck his chest and said, ‘God, show mercy to me, a sinner.’ I tell you, this person went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. All who lift themselves up will be

brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up.” P236

“Taken to its extremes, the infection of Pharisaic self-righteousness, which Jesus compares to a yeast creeping through a dough, would lead us to keep it our duty to rid the world of losers and evildoers... like pulling weeds from a garden.” P237

“Many of us want the same things. We want the world to be rid of evil. We want justice. We want to liberate the oppressed. The question is, just how do we do that? Ironically, most violence comes from a deep desire for justice... The big question seems to be what to do with evil. And when it comes to the world’s logic of redemptive violence, Christians have a major stumbling block on their hands – namely, the cross. It all goes back to... the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve are invited to enjoy the fruit of all the trees except one – The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the serpent tempts them to eat of that fruit by telling them that if they do, they will be like God. And so Adam and Eve grubbed down on it, and humanity still craves the fruit of that tree. It’s darn good fruit, but it’s the only fruit reserved only for God.” P238

“The Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes just don’t seem like the best tools with which to lead an empire or a superpower... we have to lose our lives in order to find them doesn’t sound like a good plan for national defense... I guess that’s why we hear a lot about God’s blessing and about God’s expanding our territory but very little about a cross or a love for enemies... When we fight fire with fire, we get more fire. Violence begets violence... The violent, evil ideology that drives ISIS and other groups like it has spready like a disease, and much of it is a

reaction to the violence that has been done to Muslims.” P239

“The more passionately we love our enemies, the more evil will diminish... Christianity spreads most rapidly when we are killed at the hands of evildoers without retaliating... The paradox is that the church is healthiest during eras of persecution and gets sick during periods of comfort and ease and power. It is no surprise that Muslims are less open to Christianity now than they were a year ago. Pharisaic extremists are alive today in every religion – in Islam, in Christianity, in Judaism. Church history is filled with moments of piety... This is also the twisted theology that led Hitler to ‘cleanse’ the world of Jews. And the KKK... about whiteness and ‘dispelling the darkness’, that’s why they set crosses on fire.” P141

“And yet history is also full of movements that remain faithful to the cross.” P141

“Perhaps the most powerful thing the contemporary church could do is to confess our sins to the world... Author Don Miller... and his friends dressed like monks and set up a confessional booth on their notoriously heathen college campus. But instead of hearing other people’s confessions, they were confessing their sins... and the sins of Christendom... Rather than separating ourselves from everyone we consider impure, maybe we are better off just beating our chests and praying that God would be merciful enough to save us from this present ugliness and to make our lives so beautiful that other people cannot resist that mercy.” P142

“Somehow, God likes a broken vessel. I am convinced that Jesus came not simply to make bad people good but to bring people

back to life. We can be moral but not alive; a lot of conservatives and liberals have taught me that, and I myself have been a victim of Pharisaic yeast infection. There are many people who are morally 'pure' but devoid of any life, joy, or celebration. Or some, this 'purity' means that we do not touch anything that is secular, and for others it means that we don't eat anything that is not organic. But if it is not born of relationships, if it is not liberating for passionate love, then it is the same old self-righteousness that does little more than flaunt our own purity by making the rest of the world see how dirty they are. No matter where it pops up, this yeast hinders us from seeing God's image in every human being, be they a soldier or a centurion, a tax collector or a stockbroker, a Zealot or an anarchist. No one is beyond redemption." P243

"Bono, the great theologian, said it like this in his introduction to a book of selections from the Psalms. 'The fact that scriptures are brim full of hustlers, murderers, cowards, adulterers, and mercenaries used to shock me. Now it is a source of great comfort.'" P244

He illustrates grace with many stories. A youth pastor who gets angry at a flat tire and throws a tantrum in front of his youth, that results in one of the youth giving his life to Christ, because if this guy can be a Christian, maybe he could give it a shot, too. A prostitute that solicits Shane, but is instead invited back to the Simple Way, where she confesses that she has lost her

'shine' and shows up a year later to let Shane know she has rediscovered God and her shine, and gives him the only possession she kept on the streets, a box of Marlboro Miles that he now uses as bible book marks. A young military veteran who struggled with how hard it had been to kill during the gulf war and became numb to killing, later writing, 'Do people think that government workers in Iraq are any less human than those in Oklahoma City?' That was Timothy McVeigh. The story of the father of a woman killed in Oklahoma City by McVeigh and his movement from wanting to kill McVeigh himself, but remembering that his daughter had always said, 'execution teaches hate' and learning to forgive McVeigh and forming a relationship with McVeigh's family and forgive McVeigh, saying 'a tremendous weight had been lifted.' And the Amish community that forgave the gunman who killed their children in a schoolhouse shooting, caring for the gunman's family and attending his funeral. The gunman's mother still cares for one of the survivors who now eats with a feeding tube and is confined to a wheelchair, bathing and reading to the girl. He recounts the message of Jesus, that we are all murderers, addicts, wretched and beautiful.

Speaking of Martin Buber's philosophy that we tend to see people as an IT rather than a person, he says we should not look 'at' people, but 'into' people. He quotes the catholic worker movement, "The true atheist is the one who refuses to see God's image in the face of their neighbor." P255