

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

Session Two – March 14  
Chapters 4-5

#### **Ch 4 – When Comfort Becomes Uncomfortable**

Shane returns from Calcutta to Willow Creek Community Church in the suburbs of Chicago. These were two places the spirit seemed to be working powerfully, but the transition was difficult. According to Mother Teresa it is among the wealthy that we can find the most terrible poverty of all – loneliness.

Willow Creek began small, sloppy, and passionate, but was now one of the biggest churches in the nation on a 150 acre campus. He also finished classes at Wheaton College. At Willow Creek Shane works on a service to draw 20-somethings (who were strikingly absent from church) and did urban-plunge with the enormous youth group.

At Wheaton Shane meets Rich Mullens, who is a popular Christian singer/songwriter. “Rich [Mullens] stood up in chapel and said, ‘You guys are all into that born again thing, which is great. We do need to be born again, since Jesus said that to a guy named Nicodemus. But if you tell me I have to be born again to enter the kingdom of God, I can tell you that you have to sell everything you have and give it to the poor, because Jesus said that to one guy too...[And he paused in the awkward silence.] But I guess that’s why God invented highlighters, so we can highlight the parts we like and ignore the rest’.” p. 86

In the extremities of culture from Calcutta to affluent Chicago: “Sometimes I just got cynical. That was the easiest thing to feel, as cynicism takes very little energy” p. 88 But it was hard to stay cynical in the face of so many well-meaning, beautiful people. He begins to see hospitality play out in a bizarre new context. A founder of Willow Creek shared how good they are at caring for the poor in their midst, but how detached and insular they can become. Tony Compolo says, “Jesus never says to the poor, come find the church, but he says to those of us in the church, go into the world and find the poor, hungry, homeless, imprisoned, Jesus in his disguises.” Dorothy Day wonders, “Have we even begun to be Christians?” p. 90

In the parable of the rich man who asks Jesus what he needs to do, Jesus tells him he lacks one little thing. “Sell everything you have and give it to the poor.” The man’s face sinks and he walks away. And Jesus simply lets the man choose his wealth.

“Jesus doesn’t exclude rich people; he just lets them know that their rebirth will cost them everything they have...it’s not so much about rich people as it is about the nature of the kingdom of God, which has an ethic and economy diametrically opposed to those of the world.” P. 91

### Careers:

Graduating in Sociology many asked Shane what he was going to be. “People always want to define you by what you do. I stated saying, I’m not too concerned with what I am going to do. I am more interested in who I am becoming. I want to be a lover of God and people.... I remember Mother Teresa saying, Do not worry about your career. Concern yourself with your vocation, and that is to be a lover of Jesus.” P. 95

### Singleness:

Right after asking what he was going to do, people would ask if he’d met any special “lady”. There were great expectations. Pondering this, Rich Mullens shows Shane a passage in Matthew where Jesus says that some have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of God, and that those who can accept this should accept it. Maybe singleness was a beautiful means of discipleship. He was attracted to the romantic idea of God as Lover and Provider. (In 2011, Shane did marry Katie Jo)

### American Jesus:

Watching church from a distance, Shane is beguiled by Pop Christianity. Cornell West “We’ve taken the blood at the foot of the cross and turned it into Kool-

Aide” p. 98

George Bernard Shaw “God created us in his image, and we decided to return the favor.” P. 98

Emile Durkheim says “often what humans do, whether aboriginal tribes in the jungle or sophisticated clans in industrial countries, is take the values and traditions that we most admire about ourselves and project them onto a totem. Eventually, we stand in awe of that totem and end up worshiping an incarnation of the things we love about ourselves.” P. 98

“I decided the best way to discover the historical Jesus was to deconstruct the American Totem.” P.99

On a survey 80 percent of people identifying as “strong followers of Jesus” said Jesus spent time with the poor. Later in the survey, only 2 percent of those same respondents said they did the same. “We can adore the cross without taking up our own.” P. 99.

“No wonder that the footsteps of Jesus lead from tax collectors to the lepers. I truly believe that when the poor meet the rich, riches will have no meaning. And then the rich meet the poor, poverty will come to an end.” P. 100

## Ch 5 – Another Way of Doing Life

“Christians live pretty much like everybody else; they just sprinkle a little Jesus in along the way... Few people are interested in a religion that has nothing to say to the world and offers them only life after death, when what people are really wondering is whether there is life before death.” P. 101

“As my teacher Tony Campolo used to ask, ‘Even if there were no heaven and there were no hell, would you still follow Jesus? Would you follow him for the life, joy, and fulfillment he gives you right now?’ ... And yet I am convinced that Jesus came not just

to prepare us to die but to teach us how to live... After all, how hard could it be to love our enemies in heaven?" p. 101

The early Christian church was known as the Way. "Emperor Julian confessed the Godless Galileans feed our poor in addition to their own." In this kingdom everything is backward and upside-down.

Shane tells the story of their new community. He decides to look passed the American Dream to scriptures and the poor. "When Dorothy Day recalls the beginning of the Catholic Worker movement, she says very unassumingly, We were just there talking and it happened. We were just sitting there talking and people moved in. We were just sitting there talking and the lines began to form... and it is still going on." P. 104

Shane and his friends decided to give their vision a shot. 6 of them move into a poor Pennsylvania neighborhood. They had no idea what they were getting into. Their days were full of surprises and interruptions. They help local kids with homework, share food, celebrate, supply water or blankets or a place to cry. They share with their neighbors and reclaim abandoned places and beautify the neighborhood. "We try to make ugly things beautiful and to make murals... Instead of violence, we learn imagination and sharing." P. 109

"We fight terrorism – the terrorism within each of us, the terrorism of corporate greed, of American consumerism, of war. We are not pacifist hippies but passionate lovers who abhor passivity and violence. We spend our lives actively resisting everything that destroys life..." p. 110

They've made plenty of mistakes, and never learned the secret to not hurt one another. They share healthy responsibilities and

expectations. They set out not to have programs but to work for the good of the neighborhood, simply be good neighbors. "Sometimes we have Evangelicals who pretentiously ask how we evangelize people. I tell them we bring folks like them here to learn the kingdom of God from the poor... for Jesus did not seek out the rich and powerful in order to trickle down his kingdom... Many spiritual seekers have not been able to hear the words of Christians because the lives of Christians have been making so much horrible noise." P. 115 Shane notes that many people have stopped listening, so their job may be to Amplify the voices not being heard.

He weighs stability vs. being a nomad. Staying in one place vs traveling (or couch surfing) and letting God provide. Building relationships both ways works, but staying in one place to build long-term relationships, heal wounds, and maybe not do everything magically before moving on is Shane's 'radical' calling.

He notes that greatness is a siren. Jesus was tempted by Satan to do the spectacular, but Jesus calls us to littleness, the mustard seed.

But Shane and his friends are not sacrificial servants, they are simply in love with God. Dorothy Day says, "Don't call us Saints, we don't want to be dismissed that easily." P. 121

The mission is all around us. When someone told Mother Teresa that they wouldn't do what she did for a million dollars, she said, Me Neither. Shane feels almost selfish sometimes for the gift of Community he has, but there is enough beauty to go around to everyone. Although, simple is not easy. "Love is a harsh and dreadful thing to ask of us, but it is the only answer." P. 124

Vocation comes from the same root as the word Voice. In the best communities people are able to discern and redefine their vocations. Frederick Buechner says, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” Shane explains, “Many Christians who are not fulfilled in their spiritual lives because they have no sense of their gifts or purpose, and they just run to the mission field to save souls rather than transform lives and communities using their gifts and those of the people they live among.” P. 127

“Many of us feel an inner collision between the old life and the new one.” P. 129

“But God is everywhere, always ahead of us. So missions is more about recognizing where God is at work and joining in. Places cannot be God forsaken, but they can be church forsaken.” P. 133

“Jesus was not a missionary to the poor, he was the poor. Born a baby refugee from the badlands of Nazareth, wandered a world a homeless rabbi, died the rotten death of insurrectionists and bandits on the cross, executed by an oppressive empire, buried in a borrowed tomb. Jesus was crucified not

for helping the poor people but for joining them. That is the Jesus we follow.” P. 134

“The truth is everyone in our culture has been deeply polluted by the noise and garbage of this world, and we all need to be washed clean.” P. 137

“We need converts in the best sense of the word, people who are marked by the renewing of their minds and imaginations, who no longer conform to the pattern that is destroying our world. Otherwise, we have only believers, and believers are a dime-a-dozen nowadays.” P. 140

The drug rehab that Shane and his friends try to start fails until they realize that none of them are heroin addicts, so they find recovering addicts, and they learn not only about drug addiction, but about their own addictions. And they learn that they cannot look at the sick without also looking at the cause, both personal and societal. “We are called to be the Good Samaritan. But after you lift so many people out of the ditch you start to ask, maybe the whole road to Jericho needs to be repaved.” P. 146

Is there a bible passage or story you don’t like and don’t agree with? Do you wrestle with it or dismiss it? Try wrestling with it a little more, and invite those around you to do so with you.

When you look and see the way people live (you and others around you), what parts of the lifestyle are in opposition to the example of Jesus’ lifestyle? Understanding that change is uncomfortable, how might God be calling you to GO into the world?

In what ways *HAS* Christianity shown the world another way?