

## An Angel Visits Mary: The First Christian

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Rich Nathan

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Advent: Visitations Series

Luke 1.26-38

If someone was to ask you who was the first Christian in history, how would you answer? Most of you know that I was raised in a Jewish family in New York. And as a Jew growing up in New York, if you had asked me who was the first Christian, I probably would have answered, “Jesus; Jesus was the first Christian. I thought Jesus was a Jew who became the first Christian.” But for those of you who know that the word “Christian” means “follower of Christ,” you would respond to my naïve answer and say, “Wait a minute. Jesus wasn’t the first follower of Jesus, so he couldn’t have been the first Christian.”

So, who was the first Christian? Some of you who know your Bible well might say that strictly speaking the first use of the term Christian occurred years after Jesus died on a cross and rose from the dead. As the early church spread beyond the confines of Israel up to Antioch in Syria, we read in Acts 11.26,

*The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

But most folks would say there were certainly followers of Christ before the church started in Antioch, even if the precise term Christian wasn’t used. There were Christians before the term was used. So, who was the first Christian? Was it Peter, the most famous of Jesus’ disciples? Well, the Gospel of John tells us that Peter’s brother, Andrew, actually led Peter to Christ. So, maybe the first Christian was Andrew. But, the Gospel of John says that it was John the Baptist, who pointed to Andrew to Jesus. Here is what we read in John 1.35-36:

John 1:35–36 (NIV)

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

So, maybe John the Baptist was the first Christian. But before John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, in fact, 30 years before, there was a teenage girl named Mary, who would have been known in her day by her Hebrew name, Miriam. And Mary, or Miriam, has a great claim to the title “first Christian.” See, she is the first person in history to hear that God’s plan of salvation was wrapped up in a person named Jesus. The Old Testament prophets knew that God was one day going to send the Messiah to save the world. Certainly, people who lived during the Old Testament era and who trusted in God’s future plan to save the world, were saved. But during the Old Testament era no one knew who the Savior and Messiah would be until Mary, a

teenage girl, was told that God's plan of salvation would be fulfilled through a person named Jesus.

And not only did she hear the message of salvation through Jesus, but Mary is the first person in history to say yes to receiving Jesus into her life.

This is the season of the year that in the church calendar is called Advent. The English word Advent comes from an old Latin word "adventus" which means approach or arrival.

Adventus = Approach or Arrival

During Advent, Christians around the world wait for the approach, wait for the arrival of the Savior on Christmas day. The story we're going to look at today involves an angel named Gabriel, who visited a young girl named Mary. Last week we started this series titled Visitations, but during Advent we're going to be looking at the four visitations that the Gospel writer, Luke, records took place before God visited the world at Christmas. I've titled today's message "An Angel Visits Mary: The First Christian." Let's pray.

Luke 1:26–38 (NIV)

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Let me give you some background to this text. This story that we just read together is often called the Annunciation – the announcement by the Angel Gabriel to Mary that she would conceive and bear a child named Jesus, who would be the Savior of the world.

Now, as an initial matter, it is really important for us to consider how women-centric the Gospel is. Christianity is often accused as being a male chauvinist religion. There is absolutely no doubt that historically there have been many church leaders who have taught a distorted version of Christianity that did oppress women. There is no doubt that throughout history there have been incredibly unfortunate statements and actions by church leaders that restricted God's call upon women, that limited women's roles to something behind the scenes. I've even been in settings where men would not allow women to verbally pray in public. But male dominance, male chauvinism, is a gross distortion of the Gospel message. Because the Gospel accounts are amazingly women-centric.

I think a great case can be made that Mary was the first Christian. She responded in faith to the angel's announcement. And so did her cousin, Elizabeth, while Zechariah, who was a male priest, responded in unbelief and was judged for his unbelief. It was a group of women who stayed by the cross while Jesus was crucified while most of his male disciples fled in fear. And it was to a woman named Mary Magdalene that Jesus first showed himself to be resurrected from the dead. And he told this woman to spread the message of his resurrection to his male disciples.

But not only is the Gospel story women-centric, but just by way of background again, we should note that Mary, who I'm calling the first Christian, was almost certainly between 12-13 years old. The Mary that we are going to read about today is not a mature adult woman. She is a very woman entering into her teen years. And the reason we believe that is because when Mary is told by the angel that she is going to bear a child, she says in v. 34,

Luke 1:34 (NIV)

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The term virgin specifies that Mary was a young girl of marriageable age, 12-13 years old; almost never older than 14 or 15. Jewish practice in the 1<sup>st</sup> century involved a betrothal in which a contract was drawn up. The groom paid a bride price, literally gave the girl's father money. Typically, the girl would still live in her father's home for another year during which she would not be dating her future husband and certainly not be having sex with her future husband.

But if you were looking for evidence that the story we're reading here in the gospel of Luke is true, you need to look no further than the fact that an angel communicates God's plan of salvation first to a poor, young Jewish teenage girl. In a culture like ancient Jewish culture that valued maleness above femaleness and certainly valued age above youth, there would have been no propaganda value for Luke in making up this story. If you're going to make up a story in the ancient world and you want it to be easily embraced, you would make up a story of God speaking to an 80-year old deeply religious man. People would have said, "Yes, that's credible." But God speaking to a 12-13 year old teenage girl, that's ridiculous.

The reason this story is here in the Gospel of Luke is because it happened just this way. It's true. And because in the Gospels we encounter a God, who does not judge people the way we judge them. God doesn't have the same hierarchy of value in which we judge men to be more important than women, or adults to be more important than teenagers, or the rich to be more important than the poor, or Americans to be more important than those who are born in some other part of the world.

Now, as I said, Mary has a great claim to the title "first Christian."

Recently, one of the many contenders for the Republican Party's nomination proposed that the United States only allow in refugees from Syria, who could prove that they were Christians. We shouldn't let in Muslims; we should only let in Christians. And so this candidate was asked, "Well, how can you tell if someone is a Christian?" He answered, "Oh, I think you'd know." And when he was pressed by reporters, who asked "how, how would you know if someone was a Christian?" he said, "It's obvious. You just know." I would suggest that it is not obvious. And I would ask you how you would know if someone was a Christian.

Let me make this even more personal. How would you know if you were a Christian? When we think about identifying who is and who is not a Christian, we are not talking about carrying around some little religious identity card, or filling out some census form in which you say, "Well, I'm not a Jew, I'm not a Muslim, I'm not a Buddhist, I guess I'm a Christian." I think this passage helps us to identify who's who and what's what. And it helps us to figure out if we're Christians or not.

We can break this story up into two parts. First, what was the message that Mary heard? And second, what was the response that Mary gave? Let's begin with the message that Mary heard.

The message that Mary heard

Here is what we read in vv. 31-33:

Luke 1:31–33 (NIV)

31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

The message that Mary heard was about Jesus.

The message is about Jesus

You know, this is the time of year when sports fans are really concerned about titles.

Picture of The Buckeye Football Banner

Of course, if you are a true sports fan, you're almost certainly going to respect, indeed, I would say love, the greatest-in-history team with the most titles.

Picture of The NY Yankees Banner

But no person, no team can compete with the titles that are given to Jesus. Jesus is called

The Alpha and the Omega  
The Bread of God  
The Bread of Life  
The Bridegroom  
The Chief Shepherd  
The Chosen One  
The Chosen Servant  
The Christ  
The Son of the Living God  
The Consolation of Israel  
The Cornerstone  
The Deliverer  
The Desired of all Nations  
The First and the Last  
The First Born From the Dead  
The Friend of Sinners  
The Glory of Israel  
The Good Shepherd  
The High Priest  
The Holy One of God  
Immanuel, God with Us  
The King of Kings  
The King of the Jews  
The King over the Whole Earth  
The Lamb of God  
The Light of the World  
Life for the Gentiles  
Lord of Lords  
Lord of the Sabbath  
Man of Sorrows  
The Messiah  
Prince of Peace  
The Prophet  
The Rabbi

The Redeemer  
The Righteous Judge  
The Righteous Servant  
The Rock  
The Savior  
The Suffering Servant  
The Son of David  
The Son of God  
The Son of Man  
The Son of Mary  
The Son of the Most High  
The Stone of Stumbling  
The Son of Righteousness  
True God  
True Light  
The Way, the Truth and the Life  
The Wonderful Counselor  
The Word of God

What was the message that Mary heard? The message was about Jesus.

Luke 1:31 (NIV)

31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

The name Jesus is an Anglicized version of the Greek,

Jesus

...which itself is a version of what the angel actually said to Mary.

You should call his name Yeshua.

...which means Yahweh saves; the Lord is my Savior.

What is the message Mary heard? It was a message about Jesus and our need for a Savior. See, identifying someone as a Christian is not a matter of trying to identify who are the good people versus who are the bad people. God didn't send Santa Claus into the world to point out who's been naughty and who's been nice this year. God sent Jesus into the world to be a Savior to the naughty and the nice. And being a Christian is not a matter of being religious. Jesus came into the world to be a Savior to the religious and the irreligious. No one can be called a Christian who has failed to acknowledge their need for a Savior.

Let me put it a bit differently. The Gospel story is the very opposite of the old children's story,

“The Little Engine that Could.” You know the story. This long train needs to be pushed up over a high mountain. Various large engines are asked to pull the train, but for different reasons they refuse. And then the request is made to a little engine. The little engine agrees to try. And this little engine succeeds in pulling this long train over the mountain by repeating the phrase,

*I think I can. I think I can. I think I can.*

“I think I can” is not the message that Mary heard. See Christianity has never been about The American “can-do” spirit. Mary, on her own, could not have produced a child as a virgin. She asked in verse 34:

Luke 1:34 (NIV)

34 “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The answer is not “try harder, Mary. Be the little engine that could.” The angel answered this way:

Luke 1:37 (NIV)

37 For nothing is impossible with God.

The Gospel message is all about what God can do with even the most broken lives, the most foolish choices, the most messed up situations. The Gospel is the Good News that nothing is impossible with God. No one is so far away that God’s arm can’t reach them. No one’s heart is so hard that God can’t soften them. No one is so closed that God can’t open them and no situation is so dark that God can’t make it as bright as the noon day sun. Nothing is impossible with God.

So many people think that the Christian life is essentially a life of fixing ourselves up, cleaning up all of our flaws and faults. So many people think that the Christian life is essentially a matter of positive thinking and will power. The Christian is the one whose will power is strong enough to resist temptation. And the person who is not a Christian is the person whose will power is weak.

The message that Mary heard was a message about Jesus. It wasn’t a message about Mary. It was not a message about Mary trying harder. It was not an encouragement for her to think more highly about herself than she did, or have greater self-esteem. The gospel message was a message about Mary’s need for a Savior and the world’s need for a Savior.

The thing that Mary had to embrace to be called the first Christian, the thing that we need to embrace to be called Christians is that we need a Savior. We need to be able to acknowledge that there is something desperately wrong with us because of our sin and disobedience. We have broken our relationship with God and we cannot on our own reconcile this relationship with God. We can’t on our own repair the rift between us and God. There is an unbridgeable

gulf between us and God. And we need someone to bridge the gulf, to repair the relationship, to restore us into God's good favor. We need a Savior. And Mary learned that the Savior's name was Jesus.

And the message that Mary heard was not just about Jesus. The message was about grace.

The message is about grace

Let's look at vv. 26-28 again.

Luke 1:26–28 (NIV)

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

What does it mean that Mary was highly favored?

There are two different ways that we can understand why Mary was highly favored by God. One is that God found in Mary a purity, an attractiveness, a goodness that he was able to bless. God found something in Mary that drew his attention and affection. "Mary, because you are amazing, I'm going to bless you to be the mother of the Messiah." Or second, that there was nothing in Mary worthy of God's favor. God out of his own love chose this young, poor, ordinary woman to be the mother of the Savior for no other reason than his own electing grace.

Martin Luther, the Father of the Protestant Reformation, distinguishes between two types of love – human love and divine love. He said this:

*The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it.*

In other words, human love is drawn forth by the object of our love. We see something in the object of our love, something beautiful, something attractive, and we say, "I love that person." I love them because and then you fill in the blank. I love them because they are great listeners. I love them because they are sensitive to me. I love them because they love God. I love them because they are gorgeous, they're handsome, because they have a great job and make a lot of money. I love them because they're kind, they treat me well, and they treat my kids well.

Human love is elicited by the object of the love.

Divine love is totally different. Divine love is not elicited by the object of love. Divine love is simply given regardless of the object. As a theologian named Miroslav Volf said in a wonderful book titled *Free of Charge*,

*Divine love doesn't depend on the truth, beauty, or goodness of the beloved. Because God's love isn't caused by its object, [God] can love those who are not loveable, sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong.*

Let me make this more personal. Why would God love you? Why would God love me? Why would God ever save someone like you? Or save someone like me? Why would God ever want to have a relationship with someone like you, or someone like me? Why would God ever call any of us his sons or daughters, or love any of us?

Because we cleaned up our acts? Because we're nice people? Because we carry a little identity card by the box checked Christian and not Muslim or Jew, or atheist or whatever,.

The reason why you and I and the whole world is offered salvation is simply grace, unmerited favor that has nothing to do with us, nothing to do with our performance, our goodness, our moral worth, our background, where we were born, what we look like, or what our color is. Mary was shown favor simply because of the grace of God.

What identifies a person as a Christian? They've heard a message about Jesus; that we need a Savior. And they've heard a message about grace that the only way we're going to be saved is not by earning, or deserving the favor of God. Christians are people who have completely embraced Jesus' message of grace. Christians are people who say "I am the recipient of God's totally unmerited, underserved grace."

That's why the most famous hymn in Christian history is John Newton's hymn "Amazing Grace." Listen to these words and apply them to yourself. Ask yourself, as you listen to these words, "Have I embraced this message of grace?" Here is what John Newton wrote:

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now I'm found,  
Was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.*

So, how do we identify who is a Christian? First of all, there is a message that Mary heard and that we need to hear – a message about Jesus, a message about grace. And second, there is a response that Mary gave.

The response that Mary gave

The first response that Mary gave was

A response of investigating

Here is what we read in v. 29:

Luke 1:29 (NIV)

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

The word “wondered” is not really a great translation of the original Greek. The original Greek literally meant to take an audit. It was an accounting term. What Mary was doing was taking stock; she was adding things up; she was weighing things; she was reasoning. She was investigating. She was going through the possibilities in her mind. Am I seeing things? Is this really happening to me? Is this a dream? Is this a hallucination? I’m hearing an angel talking to me. Is this real? Mary is not just rolling with her feelings. She is thinking. She is asking questions. The angel said to her that she is going to have a baby. She said, “How can this be? I am a virgin.” She is struggling with what she’s seeing. She is struggling with what she’s hearing and feeling.

And this is incredibly important because we often think that we’re so different than the people who lived in Mary’s world back in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. We say that we’re scientific people; that we use logic; we use reason and science. We ask questions and we want empirical evidence. We’re not like those superstitious people who lived way back then. They had no problem in believing. They expected to meet angels every day. That happened all the time to Mary. We are so arrogant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We’re so snobbish as it relates to people who lived a hundred years ago, or 1000-2000 years ago.

My favorite author, CS Lewis, speaks about modern people as suffering from something he calls

*Chronological snobbery*

Chronological snobbery is the idea that because it’s recent, it must be better. Because it’s newer, it must be wiser. Because everyone believes it now and the whole crowd is following that, it must be a better idea. We moderns live with the assumption that we’re so much wiser, so much smarter, so much better than our ancestors.

Mary struggled with the message. She reasoned. She did an audit. You see, what she heard made no sense to her at all. Mary was a Jew and the message she was hearing was that God, who spoke to the Jewish people at Mt. Sinai, was somehow going to become a little baby and be born through her. This was simply impossible for Mary. She experienced this conflict in her mind between what she was hearing and what she grew up believing, what her culture taught her, what her family taught her, what all of her friends said, what was the popular idea of her day.

I want you to see something in chapter 1. Last week we looked at Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. Earlier in this chapter 1 an angel comes to Zechariah and basically said,

*Even though you're old and your wife, Elizabeth, is pastchild-bearing age, you are going to have a son and you're going to name him John and he will be a great prophet.*

Zechariah asked the angel some questions and he doubted. We read this in Luke 1.18:

Luke 1:18 (NIV)

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

What does the angel do? He says to Zechariah, "Well, just for that I'm going to strike you mute. You are not going to be able to speak until your son is born." And then the same angel shows up to Mary and tells her some amazing things. "You're going to have a son even though you are a virgin." And Mary asked questions: how can this be? But this time the angel blesses her and leaves. Why did Zechariah get judged for his doubt, but Mary is blessed for hers? Was the Angel Gabriel having a bad day when he met Zechariah? Was he just in a bad mood? But when he met Mary, he had worked things out and was in a much better mood?

I think there is a nuance here that I don't want you to miss. I think that there are two very different kinds of doubt – one shown by Zechariah that caused him to be judged by the angel and other shown by Mary that resulted in her blessing. One kind of doubt keeps us from Christ and the other kind of doubt that enabled Mary to gain the title "the first Christian." See, there are some people who use doubt as a wall, as a barrier. They say, "Well, I guess I'm not the religious type. I really struggle believing in all of this spiritual stuff. I'm not the kind of person who easily believes. You see, I'm a lawyer. I like evidence. I'm a scientist. I am a doctor. I went to college. I read."

We throw our doubt up as a wall and we never inquire further. We never investigate why it is that there are so many people all around us who say that they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that is making a difference in their lives today. We never really look into what is the evidence for Christian faith? Can an intelligent person believe in Jesus?

On the other hand, there are folks like Mary who said, “I’ve got these honest doubts. I’m really struggling with this thing called faith.” My doubt is not used as a wall. I use it as a springboard to cause me to investigate further, to ask more questions, to dig in with greater intensity, to examine, to inquire, to think, to read. Don’t use your doubt like Zechariah, to excuse yourself from the hard work of faith. If you do use your doubt to keep you from the hard work of investigating further, please, friend don’t imagine you’re doing it because you’re so smart, so courageous, you’re so willing to say “I’m boldly admitting my unbelief” as if that’s a rebellious, brave move. Instead, be honest. Say about yourself, “You know, I just have to admit that it feels too hard for me to investigate this thing called Christianity that so many people have said has led them to a fulfilling, satisfying life. So I’m going to throw out a couple of questions that people haven’t been able to answer. But I’m not going to really dig in or reason.”

By the way, this issue of investigating and reasoning and struggling and wondering like Mary, is not just for the first few moments of our encounter with Christ. Struggling, reasoning, and investigating are part of the life of faith. If you embrace Christ there are going to be many occasions where you shake your head and say, “I don’t get it. How can this be?” You can use your confusion and your lack of understanding as a wall and say, “I guess I can’t go further in my relationship with you, Jesus. It stops here.” Or you can use your confusion as a springboard that causes you to have to dig deeper. To say, “What I’ve learned in the past is not sufficient for this challenge. I need to grow more. I need to be stretched further than I’ve been stretched in the past. My faith needs to grow up. I need to investigate harder. I need to dig in more diligently.”

What response did Mary give? She gave a response of investigating. And she gave

A response of surrender

Here is how Mary responded to the angel’s message.

Luke 1:38

38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your it be done to me according to your Word.”

Christians are people who surrender to Christ. People often ask the question, “If I become a Christian, does that mean I’m going to have to give up having sex with my girlfriend or boyfriend?” “If I become a Christian, does that mean that I’m going to have to be generous with my money?” “If I become a Christian, does that mean I’m going to have to tell my parents about it, or my friends?” “Will I have to stop doing this or start doing that?” What people often want to engage in is as they consider taking that step of becoming a follower of Christ is folks want to engage in sort of a cost benefit analysis. I want to know exactly, what is this going to cost me and what am I going to get out of it?

It is appropriate to some degree to count the cost. Jesus tells us that there is a cost to discipleship, a cost to following Jesus. But here's the deal. We're never told at the front end what specific things Jesus will require of us. The only thing Jesus does tell us is that the life of faith is a life of surrender. We give up the right to determine for ourselves what the cost is going to be. It's not, "Well, Lord, if you ask this of me, that's OK, but not if you ask that." To authentically follow Jesus is to give up the right to determine for yourself what the cost will be.

At the front end of choosing to follow Christ, the only thing that Mary knew was that she was surrendering her life to God. She had no idea what was going to come; what God would require of her. She had no idea that 33 years in the future she would stand there and helplessly watch while the son she brought into the world and nursed at her breast, the one she loved, was publicly humiliated, stripped of his clothes, beaten violently, spit on and nailed to a cross.

We never know what costs God will require of us when we say to the Lord, "I surrender." 41 years ago on Good Friday, following a Passover dinner in which I heard the gospel clearly explained, and I believed for the first time in my life that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah; that he was sent by God into the world to save me. I went outside at night and just opened my heart and my hands and said, "Lord, I don't know very much about you, but I do believe that you sent your Son into the world to die for me and I want to give you my life," I didn't know what that meant. I didn't know what it meant to say, "I'm a servant of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your Word," that as a result of that simple decision to surrender I would get fired from one job at a law firm, and I would voluntarily give up another where I was teaching at Ohio State, in order to become a pastor. I didn't know what God would ask when I surrendered my life to Christ. And I have no idea what God will require of me in the future.

And none of you do either. It may mean that God may want you to turn a substantial portion of your bank account over to the Lord's work. It may mean that God asks you to break up with your boyfriend or girlfriend. It may mean that God asks you to choose a certain major in college, or to follow him to another city, or in another country. But whatever God asks of us, surrendering your life to Christ means to give up the right to determine for yourself what the cost is going to be.

Let me give you a simple picture in closing. If we want to identify ourselves as Christians, we must hear a message first about Jesus, that we need a Savior. We can't save ourselves. We need to be saved by someone who is stronger than us, who is bigger than us, who is better than us. And this salvation comes about by grace – not by us earning anything, or trying harder. The message is a message of grace. How do we respond? We respond by investigating, by thinking, by engaging our brains. Is this something that I really want to sign up for? Am I really going to choose to embrace Jesus? If so, I must surrender.

What does surrender look like? So many people come to Jesus and say, "Jesus, my life is not working the way I want it to work. I'm not satisfied with my life. Will you help me out?" Jesus says, "Well, the problem is you're sitting behind the wheel of the car utterly in control of your

life. You need to let me drive.” So we say, “OK.” And we slide over and say, “Jesus, you drive.” But all the while, we still have our hand on the wheel. Jesus says, “That’s not going to work.” So we say, “OK, I’ll get in the backseat. You drive. I want my life to change. You drive. You call the shots.” We get in the backseat, but all the while we’re leaning over the front seat and we’re grabbing on to the steering wheel. Jesus says, “That’s not going to work. If you really want to become a Christian and live the Christian life, you’ve got to get out of the car. Unlock the trunk and climb into the trunk and shut it. And you can whisper through the keyhole, ‘Lord, you can drive my life anywhere you want it to go. You’re in control now.’”

Can you say that about yourself? I’m ready to climb into the trunk and allow God to take control of my life? Like Mary, I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be done to me according to your Word? Let’s pray.

## An Angel Visits Mary: The First Christian

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Rich Nathan  
December 5-6, 2015  
Advent: Visitations Series  
Luke 1.26-38

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