

## **MARY: THE LORD'S SERVANT, LUKE 1:26-56**

Casting Call #3

◆ **Intro:** The Holmes Rahe scale assigns points to various life stressors. These points are called LCUs or a life change units. Dr. Holmes and Dr. Rahe concluded that an individual that experiences a total of 300 LCUs is at high risk for illness (psychiatrically such as depression, as well as physically). Among other things, the list includes such events as:

- Marital separation 65
- Marriage 50
- Marital reconciliation 45
- Pregnancy 40
- Adding a new family member 39
- Change in financial state 38
- Trouble with in-laws 29
- Change in living conditions 25
- Change in working conditions 20
- Change in residence 20
- Change in church activities 19
- Change in social activities 18
- Change in sleep habits 16
- Minor violation of the law 11

◆ Mary could conceivably have experienced all of the events listed above for a total LCU count of 435. This total excludes divorce (73 points), as it was threatened but not carried out. Neither jail terms (40 points) or minor violations of the law (11 points) are included in the previously mentioned total, but Mary's pregnancy out of wedlock was a violation of Jewish law which, some contend, could have resulted in stoning. Christmas (12) is also excluded. With all of this, we find in Mary a remarkably

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steady and faithful individual. What does the person of Mary show us?

### **◆1. Mary was not about Mary, and my life is not about me.**

And although it might surprise you, this happens to be foundational to a steady, unflappable individual. You would never see Mary standing on a red carpet while hordes of photographers snapped her picture. If she wrote a book her face would not be on the cover.

◆But notice too that Mary did not come from a town worth mentioning, did not wow the public on a show like AGT, and still the angel calls her "highly favored". This is important. You may see your life as pretty insignificant. And you may think you grew up in Nowheresville. And you may be searching for something to convince the world, or maybe just yourself that your existence on this planet amounts to anything.

◆We try this in so many ways: hair style, fashion changes, volumes of money, sexual identity, talent, muscle mass... In fact, one thing we all have in common is that we all want to matter to somebody. And to you, Mary's story whispers "Yes, you do matter. You matter to your Maker." God is very much aware of a young, teen, female from an unimpressive town in Israel.

◆You see, Mary would be the first, I think, to tell you that she was not chosen to bear God's son because she was so worthy. After all what does she say in response to the angel?

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- ◆ “Well, I’m glad God finally noticed. Did he see my Facebook page, or did he get one of my tweets.”?
- ◆ I just knew my time was coming around. I’ve studied the Torah. I’ve obeyed my parents. I’ve got good grades every year..”?
- ◆ Her simple statement is “I am the Lord’s servant.” This is not a statement of “knuckling under” as in “Ok, fine. I guess you don’t leave me much choice, you being a big burly angel from heaven and all.” No. She has a godly perspective on her own place in the world. And friends, each of us need the same perspective not only just to keep sanity sometimes, but to be able to experience the places in life that we are with meaning and fulfillment. You may feel rejected, value-less, unspectacular. But God knows your name too. But what if you said yes to God, like Mary did?
- ◆ As an illustration, maybe it would help to consider diamonds. Diamonds are beautiful to look upon, right? They sparkle in the light. They glitter. But what is it we are enjoying? In reality it’s the light we are enjoying, isn’t it? Diamonds reflect the light so well, and last so long. If we lived in perpetual night, or darkness, nobody would care about diamonds much I imagine, except maybe on drill bit edges. Well, you and I are diamonds meant to reflect the light of Christ, the Maker, in his world. You actually bear his own image, the Bible says. So while your life is not really about you, you really shine in life when you make it about him.

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◆ Let me give another illustration of this. Medieval artists often portrayed Mary in stained glass windows. Her pane would be the only one with no color on it. Clear glass. All the other windowpanes would filter the light of the sun through their own distinctive designs. Mary was clear, unfiltered. The point was there was nothing of her to affect the light that came through. She could not advance herself and advance the work of God. Her beauty was God using an ordinary, sinful girl to send his light through into the world.

◆ *There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:9-13*

◆ If you will see your life as meant to reflect the real light, you get enlightened. Because Jesus was born of us, you get to be born of more than you could ever be. You get family with God himself. So let your savior be who you are about.

◆ **2. Mary was a person of true faith; and I need to act in true faith too.** Mary was not unintelligent in her faith. It was not blind, unthinking faith that Mary had. And still Mary's faith

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was not a prideful, demanding faith either, but a surrendering one. And this made her a ready avenue for God to work through. Let me show you.

◆**A.** True faith is Thoughtful faith. The word in verse 29, "wondered" in greek means "to make an audit, or balance accounts." She's thinking it out. Figuring, calculating the data. Reasoning it out. Mary was by no means a giddy, naive teenager as if to say, "Ooo an angel. Cool! What's next?!"

◆Mary is theologically thought full. She seems to recognize that angel repeating exact words spoke to the matriarch Sarah when her miraculous birth-giving was announced by an angel(37). The angel also mentions the promise made to King David in 1 Sam.7 (v32). We also know from her song later that she knew the sacred writings well. She mentions Abraham, Sarah's husband. Her song is modeled off of Hannah's when Samuel the Prophet was born (1Samual 2).

◆In addition, Mary is experientially thoughtful. She calculates how her own experiences line up with God's word. When you go to your aunt's house, who is finally having a baby after years of infertility, and she blurts out the same info an angel told you earlier, and then *her* baby reacts to *your* voice, -well we call those "God-Things"!

◆When you place your faith in God, as Mary had, it has nothing to do with checking your mind at the door. Ask the questions, seek the answers. Mary wan't dumb. People were

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not less intelligent 2000 years ago. She knew virgins don't just get pregnant on their own. So she asks for understanding. [Earlier in the same chapter Zachariah doubts the angel and is punished for it. But here Mary is not, because there are different kinds of doubt. There is a doubt of a closed mind, and there is a doubt of an open mind. Some doubt seeks answers and understanding. Other doubt is a defense *against* an answer, a refusal to consider one. Some Christian circles consider all doubt bad. "Don't question, just believe." they say. That's not accurate Christianity. Do ask the questions. Faith has it's reasons.

◆ Are you wondering about the reality of the Christmas story. Ask your questions. Look up the data. Evaluate the evidence that God came to earth for us.

◆ **B.** True faith is surrendering faith. When Mary says "May it be to me as you have said." that's far more than "I think I'm OK with all this. I mean, how bad can it be?" When Mary says "may it be..." she knows very well what "may be." Mary's life was going to get harder after this angel visit. People would add it all up, count the months, calculate the wedding date and make the conclusion that Mary was pregnant before married. Either she cheated on Joseph, or she and Joseph couldn't wait. In Jewish law of the day, that could get her stoned to death. Either way Jesus was always going to be seen as an illegitimate child. Later the priest Simeon would tell her a sword would pierce her soul and indeed

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that happened when she had to watch this miracle boy be pierced by Roman nails on a cross. So Mary was submitting to things suddenly getting a lot more difficult for her. Yet she considers herself the "servant", and God her Lord.

◆ Well friends, that's real Christian faith. To say, "I am the Lord's servant." is to say, 1) I am willing to do whatever you say. 2) I trust you whether it seems good or bad to me." If you are not willing to obey anything God says, and if you cannot say you will trust him whether you understand what he's doing or not -then you may believe in Jesus in some general way, but you have never said like Mary, "I am the Lord's servant."

◆ God does not invite you to live for him without having good reason and good sense. Still, Christianity is not a spiritual services vendor. It's not a negotiated deal with God. It's a surrender without an annual income guarantee. But if you *are* willing to truly say "I am the Lord's servant" you are written right into the story that never ends!

◆ **3. Mary was a person of wonder; and I ought to be in awe and wonder at God and his love as well.** Tim Keller says "One of the marks of real Christian faith... is a sense that there is some kind of power outside of you putting it's finger on you, coming to you, and dealing with you."

◆ This is a different kind of wonder than what we were looking at in verse 29. You can hear the wonder I'm speaking of here in

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Mary's song. Her "soul glorifies the Lord"(v46) She will be called blessed but not because of anything about her, really. Because "the Mighty One has don't great things *for* her."(v49) Her song is all about God and the things He does, not about her at all. (This kind of brings us back to point 1, doesn't it? It's not about you, but you get so much when recognizing who life is all about.

◆Let's illustrate. If the distance between the **earth and the sun** (93 million miles) were the thickness of a sheet of paper, then the distance from the earth to the nearest star would be a stack of papers 70 feet high. The diameter of the Milky-way galaxy would be a stack of papers over 300 miles high. There are more galaxies than we can count. Now Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus holds all this together by his powerful word.

◆Now I ask you, is this the kind of person you ask into your life to be your assistant? Do you treat God as a consultant that needs to show you how relevant he is, in order for you to pay attention? Or do you in awe and wonder recognize him as Supreme Lord?

◆Listen, our being born again, our coming to faith in Jesus, is just as improbable as Sarah getting pregnant after 90 years of barrenness. Our entrance into God's kingdom is not a normal, natural occurrence. It's as unlikely as barren Hannah having baby Samuel. Or barren Elizabeth having baby John. Our own salvation (rebirth) is just as improbably as the virgin birth. That it is even possible ought to fill us with wonder and awe like it did Mary.

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◆ **Conclusion:** Mary is a model reminding us 1) who is center stage in the universe. And 2) that opening your heart to him is not unthinkingly foolish. There's good reason to do it. She also shows us that putting your faith in Jesus is a surrender to his better will, and a trust that God's good always comes in the end. This is all captured in that simple phrase, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." And finally 3) in her song, Mary shows us how full of awe this Christmas story really is! When someone asks you if you are a Christian, or if you believe this Christmas story, and appropriate response would be, "Yes, it's incredible. It's a miracle that God ever made me his. Who'd have ever think it?!"