



## Sermon Summary Key Text: Luke 1:26-50

The message of Christmas is a call to believe in Jesus—the Savior, Messiah King. Mary was the first person to believe that Jesus was the Messiah—in a sense, she was the first Christian! As we observe her response to her angelic visitor (Luke 1:26-50), we can learn a lot about the vitality of our own Christian experience. Mary responded in **four ways which help us gauge the reality and vitality of our own Christian experience.**

**I. Captivation** Mary was gripped, captivated, by the news the angel brought (v. 46-47). Everyone's experience is unique, so we should not try to standardize Mary's conversion and growth experience, but if a person doesn't find the gospel message hard to believe at first, they have probably never really come to grips with its claims. Mary appeared to pass through at least three phases: skepticism (v. 34), followed by confused submission (v. 38), and finally total comprehension/conversion (v. 46-47). No question about it, Mary's spiritual journey began with the angel's message, but if I'm reading this correctly, Mary's conversion wasn't complete until her cousin Elizabeth validated the message she'd heard from the angel. Mary was rocked to the depths of her soul and that's a tell-tell mark of Christian conversion. Has the gospel of God's grace rocked your soul? Has it moved you in the depths of your being? Has it gripped your heart, your mind, your soul, your spirit?

**II. Wonder** Mary burst forth in praise as she realized that God had chosen her to play a pivotal role in salvation history (v. 46-49). There is a note of both joy and astonishment. Experiencing that sense of surprise is yet another strong indicator that you have experienced an authentic, eternity-altering conversion. If there is no sense of wonder in your life it's because you're centering Christianity in what you are doing rather than on what God has done for you. You didn't find God; he found you! When you look back over your spiritual journey, are you amazed at what God has done? Do you ever wonder at how spiritually blind you were? If you do, then you understand something of the wonder Mary sang about. If you don't understand that wonder, I wonder if you know Christ at all! I wonder if you have had a genuine conversion experience. If your religion is a religion of you finding God then you really don't understand the gospel yet. I question whether or not you have a saving relationship with Jesus.

**III. Fear** Isn't it interesting that the fear of God and the mercy of God go together (v. 49-50)? That's exactly what we see in Psalm 130: "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared" (v. 3-4). One of the biggest differences between a true Christian and a merely religious person is the difference in how the fear of God manifests itself in their lives. The merely religious person is trying to earn God's favor by being good enough; their motivation for obedience is the fear of punishment. But the true Christian has a fear rising out of love—a fear of wounding, of disappointing the God he loves. Contrary to external religion, true Christians are driven by a fear that arises out of love, rather than by the fear of condemnation. Their motivation is incredibly powerful and life transforming, engendering the obedience of sons and daughters, rather than the obedience of slaves. To the person who says, "Without the fear of punishment I would lose all my incentive for godly living," I would say, "Then you don't really understand the gospel."

**IV. Truth** That powerful new captivation at the center of Mary's life, which gave her a sense of wonder and zeal for godly living, resulted from grasping the truth which led to true conversion, the new birth. She realized that God not only is mighty and holy, but also merciful (v. 49-50). The holy, righteous God, who demands righteousness, also is compassionate and loving! The baby growing inside her, the Messiah, has come to fulfill the law, to die and to pay the debt so that God can now completely and freely love and accept us. Mary grasps the truth of the gospel! Mary's experience can be yours. Captivation, wonder, fear, and a love of the truth—are you experiencing them? Come to Jesus and you will!



## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage.

Let's use it to explore how to be a true Christian, like Mary...

**Monday**—Read John 3:1-20

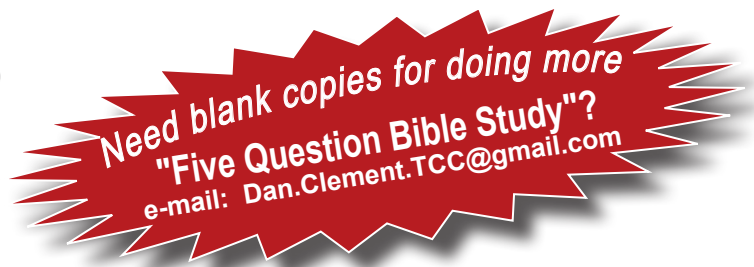
**Tuesday**— Read John 10:14-18 & 27-30

**Wednesday**— Read John 8:31-47

**Thursday**— Read Titus 3:3-7

**Friday**— Read Titus 2:11-14

**Saturday**— Read John 14:6, Luke 13:24, and Acts 4:12



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]