

Luke 1 and 2; John 2

Trinity Baptist Church, Mount Pleasant

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AM Services

**An Encouraging Word From Dr. Tim
Watson** Series- The Characters of Christmas
(Mary)

"The Seven Words Of Mary"

Have you ever thought about how many times the number seven is used in the Bible? There's just something interesting about the number seven in Scripture.

For example, Jesus spoke seven times from the cross. The book of Revelation is built around a series of sevens: Letters to the seven churches. Seven seals. Seven trumpet blasts. In the Gospel of John, you have The Seven Great Signs and Miracles that Jesus performed. In the Gospel of John, you have the Seven Great "I AM's". I am the Good Shepherd, I am the Light of the world. I am the Way the Truth and the Life. In the Book of Joshua, we see God's people marching around the walls of Jericho once a day for seven days. Then on the seventh day, they marched seven times around the walls of Jericho, and with a loud shout, the walls came tumbling down. In the Lord's prayer, there are seven request, seven petitions to God in that prayer. Seven symbolizes completion. God created the world in six days, and he rested on the seventh day when his work was complete.

Did you know that Mary the mother of Jesus speaks seven times in the Bible and then she is silent? Look in your Bible to the Gospel of Luke Chapter one and Luke Chapter two, and then later on, we will look at the Gospel of John. As we continue this series of messages, "The Characters of

Christmas", I want to share a message entitled the, "Seven Words of Mary."

As Baptists we're not really sure what to do with Mary. She makes us nervous. This is because our Catholic friends seemed to have elevated Mary to a fourth person of the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and then Mary. (The Quadrinity) The Catholic Church refers to Mary as the Queen of Heaven. As a matter of fact, each year, on December 8th, (tomorrow) the Roman Catholic Church celebrates what's called the **Feast of the Immaculate Conception**. The feast of the Immaculate Conception celebrates the belief that Mary the mother of Jesus never possessed within her original sin. Because she gave birth to the sinless son of God, Catholic theologians believe Mary had to have been sinless herself which is the belief behind the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. We know the Bible teaches that all human beings, Mary included, have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The scripture says in Romans 3:10, "There is none righteous, no, not one", and that includes Mary.

So what do we do with Mary? I believe we do what the scripture says we should do. We should not make her the fourth person of the Trinity. Let's not make too much of Mary. But on the other hand, we should not make too little of Mary, because the Bible does call her highly favored in Luke 1:28 and highly graced in Luke 1:28.

Mary is one of the great women in Scripture, along with Sarah and Ruth, and of course her cousin Elizabeth. She is the human instrument God chose to bring our Saviour, Jesus Christ into this world in human flesh.

The human dimension of Christmas cannot be fully understood without the place Mary occupies. Mary models for every one of us, the response of the coming of Jesus Christ at Christmas time. Her response to the coming of Jesus

ought to be our response. I want to share a message entitled The Seven Words of Mary, the Seven Times that Mary Speaks.

A Word of Confusion

- 1. The first word of Mary is a word of confusion.**In Luke 1:26, the Bible tells us God sent an angel, by the name of Gabriel to Mary with the exciting but overwhelming news that she was going to conceive a child whose name would be Jesus. Jesus would be the Messiah, and his kingdom would have no end. The first word that Mary speaks in the scriptures is a word of confusion. In Luke 1:34 she asked the question to Gabriel the angel, "How will this be Mary asked the angel?" How will this be, since I am a virgin?" Some of your translation may say,"how can this be, since I know no man?"

The first question about the virgin birth was not raised by an atheist, agnostic, or a liberal theologian. The first question about the virgin birth was raised by Mary the mother of Jesus. She's basically asking Gabriel the angel,"How can the God of the universe wrap himself in the form of a baby and through me an unmarried teenage girl, give birth to the Savior of the world? How can this be? How can this happen?" It is a word of confusion.

Many people have struggled with the Virgin Birth. For example, as far back as A.D.248, in the third century, writers such as the early Church Fathers were writing papers and books defending the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. In A.D. 248, there was an opponent of Christianity, a man by the name of Celsus, C-E-L-S-U-S, who denied the Virgin Birth. Celsus claimed Jesus was the natural born son of Mary and Joseph or perhaps Jesus was the natural born son of Mary and a Roman soldier. Origen of Alexandria, one of the early Church Fathers, wrote an entire book in A.D. 248 refuting the claims

of Celsus, this opponent of Christianity.

Even today, there are some theologians that continue to deny the doctrine of the Virgin Birth.

Mary's first word was a word of confusion: "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" You may be a person who struggles with the miracles of the Bible. You filter a lot of your life through a scientific, rational lens. You may have difficulty believing a miracle like the Virgin Birth. You are in good company because your response is like Mary's, a response of confusion. (How can this be?) If you have doubts, God is big enough for your doubts, but I pray that you will continue to be open to exploring the claims of Jesus Christ. God accepts where you are! The first word of Mary is a word of confusion.

Submission

2. The second word of Mary is a word of submission. Without debate

or argument, we read the second word of Mary in Luke 1:38, "I *am the Lord's servant, Mary answered. May your word to me be fulfilled. And then the angel left her.*" Mary responded with a specific, precise, immediate submission to the will of God. We see the obedience and submission of Mary to the will of God even in the midst of confusion.

Contrast Mary's response with other biblical characters. For example, when Moses was eighty years of age God called him to go to Egypt and petition Pharaoh to let the Jewish people go from slavery. Instead of submission and obedience like Mary, Moses gave four excuses as to why he could not obey God. (1) I am too old. (2) I cannot speak. (3) How can I convince the Pharaoh You sent me? (4) Moses said, "What is your name when they ask me: Who sent you?"

In contrast, here is Mary, a teenage girl that will have to bear the stigma and gossip of her small Jewish community saying to God, "Behold, I am the female servant of Yahweh. Be it done unto me, according to your word. I will submit to your will."

As a pastor, much of the counseling I do deals with discerning the will of God. What will I do with the rest of my life? What will I do as a career? Who should I marry? These questions have to do with discerning the will of God. Mary modeled the response we ought to have when it comes to the will of God: It is a word of submission and a word of obedience, "Be it done unto me, Lord, according to your word". In other words, "Whatever you want me to do, God I will do it."

Dr. Joel Gregory, Professor at Truett Seminary at Baylor University, says, "God hangs the heavy weights of destiny on the thin wire of your immediate obedience to the word of God." In *The Seven Words of Mary*, 1. A word of confusion (how can this be) 2. A word of submission. (I will be obedient to the will of God.)

Communication

3. The third word of Mary is a word of communication. In Luke

1:39-40, the angel Gabriel left Mary after communicating this exciting but overwhelming news. In Luke 1:39-40, the Bible says, "At that time Mary got ready, and she hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea where she entered Zacharias home and greeted Elizabeth."

Now the Bible tells us that Mary and Elizabeth were cousins. Close relatives and close family members. Mary must have run to Elizabeth's house and came unannounced because it was the custom of that day if you knew you had

a guest coming to your house the host would normally be waiting right outside the door anticipating your visit and prepared to invite you into the house. Scripture seems to communicate that Mary was in a big hurry, and she came unannounced, but this was acceptable because of their close relationship. Luke 1:40 says, " Mary greeted Elizabeth". We are not exactly sure what Mary said in this greeting. It was a word of astonishment. It was a word of joy. It was a word of communication. A word of revelation from Gabriel that she would be the mother of the Messiah. We are not sure of this word of greeting, Luke 1:41 says when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby(John the Baptist) "Leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth was pregnant with Jesus, cousin, John the Baptist, and isn't it interesting that even in his mother's womb, John the Baptist is bearing witness to the coming Messiah.

The point is this, when Mary understood the impact of what was going to happen she had to communicate it. She had to tell someone. There are some things, when we know it, we have to communicate it, we have to tell somebody, we cannot keep it to ourselves.

A few years ago, my son in law's mother Jerri Baker of Marshall, Texas, was dying of liver disease. She had to have a liver transplant, or she would most likely die in her early sixties. We had Jerry on every church's prayer list that we could contact. We raised thousands of dollars for a healthy liver. And when a liver became available,we used every means possible, social media, phone calls, texting to

communicate our excitement. Jerri Baker had an opportunity to move from death to life, from sickness to health and we had to communicate that good news. We could keep the good news to ourselves!

Do you want in an evaluation, do you want a litmus test of your Christian life at Christmas time? Here it is: Do you want to tell someone that Jesus saves? Are you compelled to go outside the four walls of this church and tell someone that Jesus can rescue them from death and give them life? What happened in the cradle and what happened on that cross forces us to get out and to tell someone about Jesus Christ. No wonder at Christmas time we sing that wonderful hymn, "Go tell it on the mountain. Jesus Christ is born."

We have a word of confusion, a word of submission, a word of communication.

Jubilation

4. The fourth word of Mary is a word of jubilation. It is a word of joy. In Luke 1:46-55 we have the joyful words of Mary that the Church through the ages has called The Magnificat. It is called The Magnificat because of the first few words in Luke 1:46 where Mary says, "My soul magnifies, glorifies, exalts the Lord." These nine verses are the longest word that Mary spoke. This beautiful song, this magnificent poem, was weaved together by a teenage girl. But when you read versus 46-55 of Luke 1, *you* quickly realize this was no ordinary Jewish teenager. She was a young lady who was saturated and consumed with the word of God. Mary's Bible was the Old Testament. When you carefully study these nine verses, you see a tapestry of quotations from the Old Testament.

These verses tell us what God was doing in Mary's life, but they also tell us what God was doing in the heart of that baby growing inside her womb.

In verses 46-55 of The Magnificat, Mary quotes from the book of Genesis, I-II Samuel, Psalms, Job, Isaiah and Mica and weaves all of these verses together into a spontaneous hymn of joy as to what God was doing in her life,

as well as what he would do in the life of Jesus.

- a. **Notice, first of all, she tells in The Magnificat what God has done for her.** She looks back in Luke 1:48 and says, "For God has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on, all generations will call me blessed."

She realizes God has looked down on her humility and submissiveness. She is not bragging. She is astonished that as a Jewish, peasant girl Jehovah God has taken note of her. Here we are 2000 years later, and half a world away, and were still calling her blessed and highly favored.

- b. **Secondly, she looks beyond herself.** She looks beyond herself as to what God would do in history. In Luke 1:52, she says, "God has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble." Think with me. Just in the time of Jesus you had great rulers like King Herod, but Caesar Augustus, Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas the High priest of Israel. People who thought they were somebody. And yet, all of these great rulers were overshadowed by Jesus the Messiah. While God was pulling them down from their thrones, Mary said the Messiah would lift up the lowly. Here's a hill country priest in Luke, chapter one named Zachariah and his wife, Elizabeth. Here's Joseph, a carpenter from Nazareth whom God lifts up. Here's Mary, a young Jewish girl. And while God was pulling down a heavy weights, he was exalting and lifting up people who were considered nobodies from society's point of view. You may feel insignificant and unimportant. Like a nobody at times. Friend, I want you to know, when you humble yourself before God, as Mary did, you are somebody, you are

significant. You're important to God, so important that he sent his Son into this world to die for you!

Consternation

5. **The fifth word of Mary is a word of consternation.** It is a word of distress and anxiety. Jesus was now twelve years of age, and his family had traveled to Jerusalem to the Feast at the Passover. The scriptures tells us that Jesus' family in Luke 2:41-48 were now traveling back to Nazareth with a caravan of other Jewish families, when Jesus decided to stay back in Jerusalem at the Temple. (Herod's Temple) Luke 2:46 tells us Jesus was missing for three days before they found him in Herod's Temple. Jesus is there among the theologians of the Nation of Israel, asking questions and giving profound answers. In Luke 2:48, Mary's fifth word is a word of consternation, a word filled with distress and anxiety. Luke 2:48 says, "When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, 'Why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.'" (v.48)

Some of the opponents of the virgin birth have raised the question, "If the Virgin Birth took place as the Bible records, why was Mary surprised to find Jesus in the Temple? If Mary knew Jesus was the Messiah, wouldn't she have automatically known Jesus would be at a place like the Temple."

This is a short sighted point of view. If anything, this word of consternation confirms the humanity of Mary. She is not the fourth person of the Trinity. She is a young mother in her twenties that worries about her son like any mother should worry about her twelve year old son.

This fifth word of consternation reminds us that Mary, although highly

avored, had the same struggles that we experience. She knows that Jesus is the Son of God, but Luke 2:48 reminds us that Mary had her times of doubt and unbelief, where her faith was not as strong as it could be. That's why Jesus responded in Luke 2:49, "Why were you searching for me. Didn't you know, I had to be in my Father's House?"

Many of us have walked with Christ a long time, studied the Bible, been in church for years, and yet we still have moments of doubt and unbelief and

moments of struggle. Mary the mother of Jesus, his Godly, highly favored woman gives each of us hope because she did not have everything figured out. She still had things to learn about her God and her Savior Jesus Christ. Don't ever get to the point where you think you know everything about God. Mary understood that she still needed to grow. This Christmas, may we not go through the motions of this holiday and not discover something new and fresh that God is doing. Between age twelve and thirty, there is an eighteen year gap where the Bible is silent about the life of Jesus. Eighteen years later at age thirty, we see that the boy has become a man, and Jesus begins his public ministry.

Intercession

6. The sixth word of Mary, it is a word of intercession. We are now in John Chapter 2 where a wedding is taking place. Jesus was invited to this wedding in Cana of Galilee and there was a problem: They ran out of wine.

Mary speaks her sixth word, it is a word of intercession. In John 2:3 Mary says to Jesus, "They have *no* wine." What's interesting is as an invited guest, it was not Jesus' responsibility to provide the wine for the feast. 1.)The wedding planner of the wedding feast (A governor) was the first person

responsible for the wine. (2) The father of the bride was the second person responsible.(3) Then the bridegroom was the third person responsible for supplying the wine.

When they ran out of wine, Mary bypassed all three people and made intercession to Jesus. Why did Mary do this? It's because she had found in her son Jesus Christ, he is the master of every situation. Over the last eighteen years, she had watched him grow up in that Galilean, Nazarene home. How many times had there been a problem where Mary learned to turn to the master of every situation.

If you visit the village of Cana in Galilee in the Holy Land, there is a well where people say this miracle took place. There six stone waterpots by that well that people say are similar to the water pots of the jars that Jesus filled with wine. The interesting thing here in John chapter two is that when we read this narrative on the surface we get the impression that just Jesus filled the six waterpots with wine and then concluded his first miracle. But when you carefully read John 2:8 where Jesus said, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet," we may think the servants just drew out some wine from the six water pots or the six jars. But when you read John 2:8 in the language of the New Testament when it says, "Go and draw out some," Jesus is telling the servants to go back to the source from whence they drew the water. Go back to the well itself. In other words, when Jesus filled those six stone jars with wine, he filled them to the brim, symbolizing Judaism had done all it could do. Judaism had reached its limit. When Jesus told the servants to go draw from the well itself, he was saying, "Go draw from the water source, because I have changed everything. I am doing something new." As the servants drew from the water well itself, It was now a well filled with the best wine ready to be served at the wedding.

When Jesus changes things, he changes them at their source. Christian Apologist Ravi Zacharias once said, "Jesus Christ did not come to make bad people good. But he came to make dead people alive." When Christ changes things, he changes them at their source.

That's what some of you need today. You need Jesus Christ, the Christ of Christmas, to change your life and be the answer to the situations you're facing.

Commendation

7. **We to the seventh and last word of Mary. It is a word of commendation.**

It also comes from John chapter two where Jesus is turning water into wine at the wedding in Galilee. In John 2:5 his mother Mary said to the servants at the wedding, "Do whatever he tells you."

At first we see Mary as a confused teenage girl asking, "How can this be?" Now she is a mature woman who has witnessed her son become Lord and Master, and as a result, she says, "Do whatever he says."

As far as the biblical record Mary does not speak again. In the New Testament. But later on, we see Mary in two places:

First, we see her beneath the cross. She is not only standing beneath the cross, looking up at her son but she is standing there professing him as Lord and Savior of her life, waiting for his atoning death where He will take upon himself the sins of the world.

Second, see another appearance by Mary in the upper room. The last time we see Mary in scripture is in Acts 1:14 where she is gathered with 120 people waiting for the same Holy Spirit that conceived the Christ child within her. She is waiting for the Holy Spirit to fall on her and the early Church in Pentecostal power that she might bear witness to Jesus, not only her son, but her savior.

All of us today need to stand in those last two places where Mary stood. Some of us need to be like Mary in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to fill us and empower us to live for Jesus this Christmas season. But some of us need to stand at the foot of the cross. Some of us need to stand at the foot of the cross and look to Jesus, the one who died for our sins, and make him Lord and Savior of our life.