

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen

Most of us.....at least at some time or another.....especially when we were young.....

- Have read a story.....or watched a movie.....or even taken a sporting event.....
- And placed ourselves in it.

We read the book.....

- We identify myself with the one downtrodden.....
- Or we want to be the hero, or the star in the story.
- We put ourselves into the story as if we were them or in their place.

Who of us, who have loved sports have not went into the backyard or basketball court or wherever and pretended that we were our idol that we followed?

- We pretend we were them and hit the homerun.....or shot the winning basket and won the game. Or whatever the sport and the accomplishment may be.

Today our message is based on our Gospel reading.

- And it is a bit of a bizarre account.
- Especially the actions from and the events associated with a man named Legion.

Allow me to recount the story with some of the finer points from our earlier Gospel reading.

- And as I do, I invite you to decide for yourself who you want to be, or can identify yourself with from this account.
- Of course, in this account, I exclude your choice of Jesus.
- He is King of kings and Lord of lords.
- We want to imitate what we learn from Him; but we don't even want to in anyway suggest we are like Him or can take His place.

Also, as we consider this account, it is important that we start with a little background of what had just happened prior to our Gospel reading.

- Jesus and His disciples are together.
- Jesus is teaching the Jewish people along the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

And one day He says to His disciples, lets go over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

- That would be into Gentile country.
- And so they go.

But here is where, while they are sailing, Jesus falls asleep in the boat and a large storm comes up.

- The disciples are afraid and they wake Jesus up.
- Jesus wakes up and calms the storm and then rebukes the disciples. Oh ye of little faith.
- The disciples sit in fear and wonderment of who this Jesus is.

The disciples then will be the first choice of who you might want to be in this account.

- They are the first one we have mention of; but in their fear and wonderment they are more or less observers of all that will take place.

And now the main account that we are focused on continues.

- Jesus and His disciples get out of the boat and immediately we are introduced to this man named Legion.
- Legion, because he has been possessed by so many demons.

Legion has led a troubled life.

- We are told for a long time he had wore no clothes.
- And he did not live in a house but among the tombs.
- And the people had put him in chains and shackles but he had broken them.

As Jesus stepped out of the boat, He is approached by Legion.

- When Legion saw Jesus he knew exactly who he was.
- We are told he fell down before Jesus and cried out.....
- “What have You to do with me Jesus, Son of the Most High God.”
- “I beg You do not torment me.”

And then there are the demons in Legion.

- They now speak.
- They begged Jesus, if He drove them out of Legion, not to command them to depart into the abyss.
- Notice even they recognize Jesus has all power and might and authority.

And then we are told there was a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside.

- And the demons begged Jesus to let them enter them.
- Remember, in Biblical times, for the Jewish people pigs were considered unclean animals and to be avoided and certainly not consumed.

But the demons begged Jesus to let them enter those pigs and that is exactly then what Jesus does.

- Jesus cast out the demons from Legion and they entered the pigs.
- And the herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned.

By the way, as a side note to all this, I was talking to Pastor Wilber Meyer this past week.

- He had just gotten back from a trip to Israel.
- He said they visited the site where this all took place.
- It is the only place along the Sea of Galilee where there is a large cliff that butts up against the shore.
- He said he could easily picture how this could have all taken place.
- He also said he wanted to again preach on this text and somehow show the pictures that he took of all this.

Back to our account. So, we've met the disciples, Legion, and I suppose the demons.....but now we are introduced to another player in the story.

- There were herdsmen, observers/bystanders who saw all this.
- We are told they fled and told all that had happened in the city and in the country.
- Their role in the story is important; but not a leading role.
- But nonetheless, another character for you to consider.

And now we are introduced to another group of people.

- The people who heard from the herdsmen.
- And we are told they went out to the location.
- And they found Jesus and Legion.
- And Legion was now fully clothed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and he was of right mind.

And the people that came out were told that this demon-possessed man, Legion, had been healed and all that had happened.

- And the people were afraid. Sort of like the disciples.
- In fact, we are told they were seized with a great fear.
- And the people asked Jesus to depart.

So Jesus and His disciples got in the boat to leave.

- But Legion begged that he might go with them.

But instead, Jesus sent him away saying.....

- “Return to your home and declare how much God has done for you.”
- It is the words on the cover of our bulletin today.
- And Legion went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

So where are you in the account?

- I’m sure we saw in this account some representatives from each group in our society today.

The disciples.

- Pretty much on the sidelines.
- And in fear and wonderment of who this Jesus is.

How about the herdsmen?

- They saw what all had happened and ran and told the people all that they had seen.
- But they didn’t seem to get it. They did not believe and trust.
- They ran from Jesus rather than desiring to stay with Him.
- And their motive seems to have been their possessions and now lost income. Never mind the animals were considered unclean in Old Testament Law.
- Their pigs were now drowned in the sea.
- And they asked Jesus to leave.

Or how about the majority of people in the account.

- They were told what Jesus had done.
- They came out to see.
- But they too were afraid and asked Jesus to leave.

And then there is one more person!

- The main character in the account, Legion.
- Are you him? Do you want to be him in this account?

I would argue for us here today; we can not only relate to Legion; but you and I are Legion.

- Hear me out.

Legion was a Gentile.

- So are you and I.

It was Jesus who came to Legion.

- It is Jesus who comes to us.

And Legion, naked and imprisoned, by himself, living among the tombs.

- He rejected Jesus. He asked Jesus to leave at the beginning of this account.

We too were naked.

- That is, before Christ we have nothing to show for ourselves.
- The Bible speaks often of how we, in our sinfulness, were naked in shame.
- Even Adam and Eve, in the fall, recognized their nakedness and hid from God and sewed fig leaves together to try to cover themselves.
- And Jesus, in our place, was stripped of all His clothing on the cross.

Legion was imprisoned.

- We too are imprisoned in our sins.
- Without Christ, slaves to sin.

And Legion lived among the tombs.

- We too, on our own, have only condemnation that awaits us.

And Legion wanted Jesus to leave him alone.

- We on our own, in our fallen, sinful nature, reject Jesus.

Legion was possessed by many demons.

- We too, have our demons of the past.
- Even those things that keep haunting us to this day.

And Jesus cast the demons out of the man. And they were drowned in the sea.

- And in Holy Baptism your old sinful nature was drowned just as the demons were drowned in the sea.

- Just as your demons of the past and all your sins, in Christ are no more.
- And you were raised as a child of God.
- A new person, now clothed.....in the righteousness of Christ.

And we are told that Legion, now in his right mind, fully clothed, was sitting at the feet of Jesus.

- Unlike the disciples in fear and wonderment.
- Unlike all the others who feared Jesus and wanted Him to leave.
- At the end of the account, Legion had seen Jesus, he knew who He was, and wanted to learn from Him and be with Him.

And he wanted to go with Jesus.

- But Jesus told him to stay and declare what He had done for him.
- We long to be with Jesus. In His eternal kingdom.
- But for now, He tells us to stay and proclaim all that He has done for us.
- One day we will be face to face with Jesus; but for now, He has called us to proclaim His name and do His work of the kingdom here on earth.
- You and I are like Legion. It fits well with our salvation story in Christ.

Our Gospel reading today is a bit of a bizarre story.

- And praise be to God that we are like Legion.
- Our story on our own, without Jesus, is not a glamorous story. It is a bit of a bizarre story.
- But in Christ, we can be of right mind, sit at Jesus' feet and learn from Him, and go into the world and proclaim all that He has done for us.

We have now begun what is called the “green season” of the church year.

- You see it in my stole I am wearing today and paraments.
- It is a time for us to grow in Christ.

In summary.....

- Christ has come to you.
- You are the New Testament Church. You have seen all that He has done.
- He has made you a child of God.
- Clothed you in His righteousness.
- And He has told you to now go and proclaim all that He has done for you.

Will you, with me, grow in Christ this summer.....

- And tell others what all this Jesus has done for you.....
- And invite them to come see this Jesus also?

The account this morning is a bit of a bizarre story.

- But each of our stories is a bit bizarre also, aren't they?

We really don't know how the story for Legion ultimately ended.

- After this point we are not told anything more about him.
- How was he received in the city? Did his new found zeal for the Lord continue? Did he continue on in Christ? Or did he fall back into his old ways?
- And so, this morning, I end this message by asking you.....how will your story ultimately end?
- Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.