

November 6-10, 2023 Edition

Following The Year^(s) Of Jesus Part 97

Jesus & Legion: The Showdown @ Tombstone

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November 4/5, 2023



When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday Reflection: This week we are talking about Jesus' encounter with a man possessed by so many demons he could only call himself "Legion". In this encounter we are going to learn a few lessons about evil that I think are pretty important but before we get there we need to sort of set up the story. I never really thought about this much growing up- the importance of understanding the setting of a story from the life of Jesus. Until once I heard Max Lucado telling a story about Jesus. He told the story (in which Jesus did something that seemed kind of strange to me) and then pointed out what had just happened to Jesus and what was getting ready to happen to Him and how when you looked at it that way Jesus' actions actually made perfect sense. And Max (look at that- I'm on a first name basis with my favorite Christian author- who knew?) didn't just pull from the stories in the gospel he was quoting- he pulled from all four. He had what seemed to me an encyclopedic knowledge of Jesus' life pulled from all four gospels. I can remember thinking, "I wish I knew Jesus that well."

That led me to spend a year just reading through the gospels. It was my very first year-of-Jesus and it changed how well I knew Jesus. I wouldn't say I have an encyclopedic knowledge of Jesus' life yet- maybe a child's encyclopedia?- but I do know Him WAY better than when I first started this process. So let's read the set up for this story before we actually get to Legion:

As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?" When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"
Mark 4:35-41 (NLT)

The next lines in Mark's gospel tell about them finally arriving at the destination Jesus had in mind- the other side of the lake. So what's going on? Well, as soon as Jesus says "let's cross to the other side of the lake..." the disciples would have started sweating. First of all it's getting late. While at least 4 of the disciples were fishermen and would have even fished at night they would never attempt crossing the Sea of Galilee at night. Storms arose quickly and unexpectedly and they believed the souls of the dead and monsters lurked in the depths of the lake. But when Jesus says "let's go" nobody pointed out the obvious. They were all probably hoping someone else would say something. But nobody does so pretty soon they find themselves out on the high seas and Jesus is catching some zzzzs in the back of the boat. Nobody else is sleeping though- they're too nervous- I guarantee you. Well soon the waves start getting rougher and the wind picks up and pretty soon they are in the midst of a massive storm. They're all terrified. Everyone has probably been hoping that someone else will wake Jesus up from about the time the wind first started picking up. But nobody does. Until someone can't take any more and then this:

Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?

Can you hear the desperation? The fear? Maybe you've been there. Watching as the storms that this world can and does throw at us and wondering when Jesus is going to step in and do something. Maybe you've actually said or thought those exact words, "don't you care?!?!". Sometimes Jesus does in our lives what He did with that storm- He shuts it down. He doesn't make a big scene of it- He just shuts it down. He stands up and looks around (can you see Him rubbing the sleep from His eyes?) and in essence He shushes the storm. And do you want to know what's wild? The storm shushes itself.

Then He turns to His disciples and asks why they were so afraid? I used to think this was a stern lecture. That He was maybe even wagging His finger while He said it. I don't think so anymore. It's just not really like Jesus to lecture. But it is like Him to never miss a teachable moment. It's almost like He's preparing them for what's coming the next day when they get to the other side of the lake. It always reminds me of one of my favorite hymns to sing when I was growing up and I think I'll leave you with the words from that hymn today. Spend some time thinking about why Jesus sometimes shushes our storms and why sometimes He instead takes our hand and walks us through our storms. I'm still working that one out myself.

Master, the tempest is raging! The billows are tossing high! The sky is o'ershadowed with blackness, No shelter or help is nigh: "Carest Thou not that we perish?" How canst Thou lie asleep, When each moment so madly is threat'ning A grave in the angry deep? The winds and the waves shall obey Thy will. Peace, be still! Peace, be still! Peace, be still! Peace, be still! Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea, Or demons, or men, or whatever it be, No water can swallow the ship where lies the Master of ocean and earth and skies; They all shall sweetly obey Thy will! Peace! Peace! be still!

I wish so much you could experience the dynamics of that song. There was this older guy that only got to lead singing at our church on Sunday nights (he was my friend's grandpa- Walter Booth) and he had this amazing gravelly baritone singing voice. And he was the best I've ever seen at ramping up that part right before peace-be-still. I get chills just thinking about. I pray I'll remember that when I find myself in the midst of my own personal storms as well.

Tuesday Reflection: Ok so Jesus and His disciples are cruising to the-other-side-of-the-lake. What does that mean? Well in first century Israel there were more than just Jews living among them. The nation of Israel had been conquered repeatedly since about the 8th century BC- most recently by the Romans. One of the things that the Romans liked to do was settle their retired legions of soldiers together and create these pockets of Roman soldiers that in the event of a problem could gather like a sort of local militia and put down any problems that might arise. There were several such settlements on the south-eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The region is called the Decapolis in the Bible- literally the 10 cities. It was a place with very few Jews and tons of gentiles. The Jewish children growing up on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee (where Jesus and most of his disciples grew up in places like Nazareth and Capernaum) would have been warned of the wickedness going on in the Decapolis. They would have painted a picture of boogey men and monsters and sirens. I'm pretty sure none of Jesus' disciples (with the possible exception of Matthew) had ever been

there. If you were an I Love Lucy fan maybe you remember the episode with Tennessee Ernie Ford where he comes to New York from his little holler in Tennessee and is warned by him mama to watch out for bad guys and worse women (those painted women don't you know).

That's how the disciples view the Decapolis. They would have been nervous immediately when Jesus says that's where they're headed. Then the storm comes up and they were probably thinking, "see! This is what happens when you try to go to the-other-side-of-the-lake! I knew we shouldn't be doing this. Mama was right! But if they thought that the storm was the scariest thing they were going to encounter on their little excursion to the-other-side-of-the-lake they were sadly mistaken:

So they arrived at the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. Whenever he was put into chains and shackles-as he often was-he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones. When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him, and bowed low before him. With a shriek, he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had already said to the spirit, "Come out of the man, you evil spirit." Then Jesus demanded, "What is your name?" And he replied, "My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man." Then the evil spirits begged him again and again not to send them to some distant place. There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby. "Send us into those pigs," the spirits begged. "Let us enter them." So Jesus gave them permission. The evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd of about 2,000 pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water. The herdsmen fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. People rushed out to see what had happened. A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid. Then those who had seen what happened told the others about the demon-possessed man and the pigs. And the crowd began pleading with Jesus to go away and leave them alone. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. But Jesus said, "No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been." So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them. Mark 5:1-20 (NLT)

What do you think every disciple is thinking as this wild, crazy & naked man comes charging at them shouting at the top of his lungs as soon as the land? Once again, mama was right! NEVER EVER GO TO THE-OTHER-SIDE-OF-THE-LAKE!!!!!!!!!! But once again Jesus has the situation firmly in hand. And once again they learn that there is nothing Jesus can't handle. Storms, demons, renegade religious leaders- it doesn't matter. Jesus has got this. He's also got you. And me. There are probably many reasons Jesus wanted this story included in the gospel of Mark but one of them is probably that there's nothing He can't handle. And that if you're

sailing through this world with Jesus then there's nothing that you can't handle with His help. It's hard to believe sometimes though, isn't it? I know it is for me. Heck, it's hard to write it right now. So often I feel like a used car salesman saying, "just give your life to Jesus and do these 3 simple steps and Jesus will calm whatever storms or antagonists that come at you and your life." And I believe it (not the 3 simple steps part but the rest of it I totally believe) but it's not as simple or clean or neat as I once thought it was. It's much less clear but one thing I can write and believe with all my heart is this- if you are sailing through this life with Jesus you will never be swallowed up by a storm or overcome by your antagonists. Never. It may feel that way to us and to others looking on but Jesus has made a promise to you and to me and I do my best to keep it at the front of my mind at all times:

"I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6 (NLT)

Those words were written to Christians who were being persecuted- some of them to their deaths. And they went to their last moments with those words resounding through their minds believing it with all of their hearts. How can one be sure it's true? Because of the gospels. Because of stories like these. Jesus. Has. The. Power. To. Defeat. Death.

So don't be afraid.

Wednesday Reflection: So let's get down to what this story of Legion teaches us. The first lesson I want to focus on is that this story teaches us that Evil exists. Real Evil. Evil with a capital "E". In our culture we want to deny the existence of true Evil (the kind with a capital "E") because if Evil exists then wouldn't it suggest that Good exists (that's good with a capital "G")? That's what Philosophers throughout history have concluded. You can't have one without the other. It just defies logic and reality.

So what many in our culture have attempted to do is deny that Evil exists and by extension that Good exists. It was a philosophy that was already taking root in the first century. Many of the Roman and Greek philosophers had already started embracing philosophies that denied the existence of the gods and by extension the existence of any personal force of evil. But Mark won't have it in his gospel. He wants to make sure we know where all this pain and suffering comes from:

When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from a cemetery to meet him. Mark 5:2 (NLT)

According to Mark this guy was "possessed" by Evil. It wasn't just some physical or psychological malady. This was a spirit of evil possessing this poor guy. We'll talk more about him in coming days but I just wanted to take today to point out how absolutely nuanced the first century Jewish mindset was when it came to the things that plague human beings. I know what some of you might be thinking- didn't they just blame everything on demonic possession? I mean, they were simple people. They didn't understand all the scientific things that could cause what they just painted as demonic possession with a wide brush, right?

Wrong:

News about him spread all over Syria, and people with every kind of sickness or disease were brought to him. Some of them had a lot of demons in them, others were thought to be crazy, and still others could not walk. But Jesus healed them all. Matthew 4:24 (CEV)

Look at all the reasons Matthew says people flocked to Jesus:

1. Sickness or disease.
2. Demonic possession.
3. "Crazy" or psychological symptoms (separate from demonic possession).
4. Paralysis (separate from demonic possession).

The Jews could tell the difference between demonic possession, sickness/disease, mental or psychological problems and paralysis. I don't know how but they did see these things as separate problems. Evil (with a capital "E") was seen as being a problem in the first century but not the only reason for the problems that plague human beings. When you think about it, the Bible gives several reasons for the suffering of human beings.

1. Physical sickness/weakness brought on by disease or not taking care of oneself the prescription for which will be medicine or rest or nutrition.
2. Moral/spiritual issues brought on by guilt and shame the prescription for which will be repenting and changing the trajectory of ones life.
3. Mental or psychological issues caused by patterns of thinking the prescription for which would be the love and support of ones community (we know now that a lot of mental and psychological struggles are not simply due to our thinking but also how our physiology/ brain chemistry impacts our thinking- I'm not sure if the Bible differentiates any of these causes or not- I'll need to do some more study to figure that out).
4. Demonic issues caused by Evil (with a capital "E") that require prayer and scripture.

As it turns out the first century Jewish view of the things that can plague human beings is much more nuanced than most of our 21st century views. So often people only see the materialistic side of things and the answer to just about any and all problems is to take-a-pill. There are those who see things from a purely psychological perspective and their answer is all-you-need-is-enough-therapy. Then there are those who see things mainly from a Pharisaical/moralistic perspective and their answer is always all-you-need-to-do-is-figure-out-what-you've-done-wrong-and-repent-so-God-can/will-heal-you. And finally there are those who are more superstitious than the Bible is blaming everything on the devil and demonic activity.

Who knew the Bible had a more nuanced view of the human condition than most 21st century people? The Bible knows there are some problems in our lives that come from within and some that come from without. It may be hard for us to know which is which even when looking at our own personal struggles but one thing is sure according to the Bible- Evil (with a capital "E") exists but it's not at the root of every single one of our struggles.

But it is at the root of some of them. Miss that and you invite an awful lot of trouble into your life.

Thursday Reflection: Now that we've established that Evil (with a capital "E") exists (according to the Bible) we can move on and learn from this story that Evil has a pattern.

When talking about the guy who rushes Jesus and His disciples when He lands Mark says this:

No one was able to tie the man up anymore, not even with a chain. Mark 5:3 (NLT)

Do you want to know what freaks me out about that sentence? The word "anymore". That means they used to be able to tie him up and restrain him. But not "anymore". Why? Because Evil doesn't stay static in our lives- it grows. That's the patter of Evil. It doesn't just show up in our lives full blown and functionally destructive- it starts small. James puts it like this:

Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. James 1:14-15 (NLT)

There is a process to evil. A progressive pattern that it exhibits. James says it starts with temptation which is an attack on two different fronts or from two different enemies. Temptation comes from the Tempter (with a capital "T") but his temptations are not aimed at our strengths- they're aimed at our weaknesses. Our internal weaknesses. James calls them desires but that English word doesn't do justice to the word James uses. The word James uses here is "epistumia" which literally means hyper-desires. These are the things we want too much. These are the things that we have told ourselves if-I-don't-have-this-I-won't-be-ok. If I have any of those in my life then that's exactly what the Tempter (Evil with a capital "E") will target with his temptations. These temptations when paired with our hyper-desires will drag us away if we're not careful. The word James uses here is the words for snaring an animal. If we're not careful we'll be caught. Trapped. As we give in these temptations coupled with our hyper-desires "give birth" within us to sinful-actions. The temptation and even the hyper-desires aren't technically the problem. It's what we do when the Tempter uses our hyper-desires against us to get us to fall into his trap.

Do you see the process? The pattern? It's progressive. Even the sinful actions don't immediately land us in Hell (which is the ultimate goal of the Tempter- to land us in a sort of hell-on-earth even on this side of eternity) but eventually the evil will grow more and more powerful until we find ourselves in a very dark place. James says that when that sin is allowed to grow it eventually gives birth to death. Not physical death necessarily but a sort of walking dead zombielike existence where we are ruled by Evil. It's a process that starts with our hyper-desires which if we're not careful over time leads to the grandchildren of those hyper-desires- death.

Is that what happened to this guy named Legion? I don't know. I don't know how demonic possession worked in the first century. There seems to be an awful lot of it and I'm not sure why. I've heard people hypothesize that if God was going to be allowed to roam the earth in the person of Jesus then the rules-of-engagment that God has to have agreed to with Satan (CS Lewis would call it the deep-magic) dictated that demonic activity would also be allowed to be ramped up. I don't know about Legion but I know about my own experiences and in my own experiences Evil has been a progressive pattern. You can see it clearly in addiction. Almost nobody is addicted after one instance of using substances or even attitudes/behaviors/emotions that we choose to embrace that can become addictive. What happens with addiction is something promises to make you feel better whether it's a drink or a puff or

exploding with anger or lusting or spending erratically or greed or... you get the picture. And generally when we give in to a temptation to make things superficially better we are rewarded. Sure enough- things seem better. For a bit. But over time it takes more and more to give us that feeling of well being and eventually we get to a point where we can't even replicate that initial feeling the substance or emotion or behavior gave us and so we ramp up our activity believing maybe that sense of well being is just beyond the next drink/pill/behavior.

Can you hear James talking about being dragged away by our own hyper-desires? And what happens over time is exactly what James was taking about- eventually our sinful actions lead to death. A very dark place for those who are still medically "alive" with a heartbeat but have no Life (with a capital "L") to speak of.

Yes- Evil has a patter but so does Life and we'll talk about the patter of Life tomorrow.

Friday Reflection: One last thing we're going to look at is the antidote to Evil in our lives. We've already noticed that Evil (with a capital "E") exists (according to the Bible) and that Evil has a progressive pattern in our lives. Today I want to look at how Life (with a capital "L") also has a progressive pattern. Yesterday we spent the entire reflection noticing how James talks about the progression of evil and how it's not something that comes upon us all at once. It grows like a cancer. The same thing is true of Life. It grows (but let's not say like-a-cancer for Life, let's say it grows like-an-tree [this analogy will make much more sense very soon]). And it all begins with Jesus. When the man who was possessed by a demon notices Jesus this is what he does:

When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him, and bowed low before him. With a shriek, he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had already said to the spirit, "Come out of the man, you evil spirit." Mark 5:6-8 (NLT)

Up until just this week I only really thought one thing about this part of the story- the demons couldn't help but run at Jesus when they saw Him. One commentator I read believes the demons were trying to intimidate Jesus or even outright attack Him. This commentator points out that the storm from Mark chapter 4 isn't just a storm- he believes it was a demonic attack on Jesus' boat. He points out that the words Jesus uses to silence the storm (Be quiet!) is the exact same thing He tells the man possessed by a demon in Mark 1:25 (Be quiet!). Now that I think about it "be quiet" seems like a strange thing to say to a storm but what do I know? Jesus is always doing things that make me wonder. All that to say, I always thought the demons ran at Jesus because they couldn't help themselves.

Now I'm not so sure. Now I'm wondering if the man that is still somewhere deep inside that prison cell that his body had become saw Jesus and with all His might ran toward the only One that might be able to free him? I see it now in the words that are spoken by Legion- Why are you interfering with me? Don't torture me! Were all those words only words spoken by the demon or were some of them from the tortured man? We'll never know for sure but I like to think that when he saw Jesus it was the human that ran to Him. We'd be wise to do the same.

For Legion all it took was one word from Jesus and he was healed. All those demons that had possessed him were gone with that one word from Jesus- go. For us making our way back to Life (with a capital "L") is much more of a process. As we saw yesterday, we don't descend into a hell-on-earth type of existence that the Bible calls "death" overnight. It's a long process. The same thing is true of climbing out of any hole we've dug for ourselves. It's a process and the Bible describes it in a couple of ways. Here's one of my favorites:

Happy are those who don't listen to the wicked, who don't go where sinners go, who don't do what evil people do. They love the Lord's teachings, and they think about those teachings day and night. They are strong, like a tree planted by a river. The tree produces fruit in season, and its leaves don't die. Everything they do will succeed. Psalm 1:1-3 (NLT)

Do you see what it takes to find Life? Change who you listen to, who you hang around with and what you do. That subtracts out most of the bad influences in your life. Then add the stuff that leads to life- love for the Lord's teachings and meditating on those teachings (figuring out what incorporating His words into my life will look like) day and night. If you do that do you see what the Bible promises? Happy, strong and successful. That's a pretty good description of the Life (with a capital "L") that the Bible is continually inviting us to. Is there anything else you want out of this life but the Life that is defined by happiness, strength and success? I can't think of anything. So how do I get there? Well, there's already an open invitation from God Himself:

Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses... Oh, that you would choose life, so that you... might live! You can make this choice by loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. Deuteronomy 30:19-20 (NLT)

You have to choose Life. It's interesting to me that God says here that when we don't choose Life with Him we are choosing Death by default. Choose Life is God's invitation. How? He tells us again- love God, obey Him and commit yourself firmly to Him. It's just another way of looking at Psalm chapter 1. And when you do you will begin to climb out of the hole we often dig for ourselves and over time we will find that death has lost its hold on us and Life has overwhelmed the grave even on this side of eternity. That's exactly what happened to Legion. He chooses Life (at least I think he did). I think he gathered every ounce of control he had left and ran at Jesus. A gentile with no reason to believe that the Messiah of the Jews would be willing to help him (who knows what this guy did to get to where he was) saw Jesus for exactly Who He Was- the most merciful and grace filled life that had ever been lived Who came to this earth to save not just the Jews but all of us. He ran right at Jesus and asked for help. He chose life. And what happened after Legion ran to Jesus?

Then Jesus demanded, "What is your name?" And he replied, "My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man." Then the evil spirits begged him again and again not to send them to some distant place. There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby. "Send us into those pigs," the spirits begged. "Let us enter them." So Jesus gave them permission. The evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd of about 2,000 pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water. Mark 5:9-13 (NLT)

The demons beg Jesus for mercy. Isn't that hysterical? They offered no mercy to the man they possessed but they beg Jesus for mercy. Don't send us into the abyss. In Matthew we are told they add "before the appointed time." It's like they know their time on earth is limited and they aren't ready to be cast away just yet. And Jesus says ok- into the pigs with you but no more human hosts for you lot. The demons go into the pigs and the pigs rush headlong into the Sea of Galilee and drown. Which is kind of funny actually (well, not for the pigs and not for the pig farmers but still... pretty funny). Why is it funny?

Because remember when I was telling you on Monday that the Jews believed the souls of the dead were in the Sea of Galilee? They believed the Sea of Galilee was inhabited by monsters and ghosts and they were terrified of its depths. They called it "the Abyss". Do you see it now? The demons beg Jesus not to send them to the real "abyss" and so Jesus casts them into the pigs who run headlong into and drown in... wait for it... THE ABYSS! That Jesus can be such a card sometimes, can't He? I wonder if He didn't chuckle a bit while this whole thing was playing out. I wonder if any of His disciples saw the irony? I wonder if Jesus turned to them and said, "did you see that? They asked to not be sent to the abyss so I sent them into those pigs and they ran into the abyss? No? Nobody? Just me? Ok then I'll move on. After the man is cleansed they give him clothes and he is in his right mind for the first time in a really long time. And he asks Jesus if he can come with them:

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. But Jesus said, "No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been." So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them. Mark 5:18-20 (NLT)

The guy still wants to choose Jesus. To choose Life (with a capital "L"). He wants to go with them but Jesus tells him instead to stay and tell everyone what God had done for him. Can you imagine a better testimonial? A more powerful testimonial? Trust me, everybody in the Decapolis (the 10 cities) would have known about this guy. Word is going to fly through those 10 towns about the Showdown at Tombstone. About this Jew named Jesus who did what nobody else could do- bind the demons that bound that man. There could be no better or more powerful spokesman for Jesus than this guy.

And we know that later when Jesus came back to the Decapolis multitudes from the region (not Jews but gentiles) followed Him. We know that after Jesus' death, burial and resurrection that the area of the Decapolis and specifically the city of Pella became a flash point for Christianity. The region became predominantly Christian and all Historians can think of to explain this strange phenomenon is that the way was paved by a man who had been called Legion. We don't know what his real name was, but Jesus does. And that's what matters.

So how about me and you? What does Jesus want from us? He wants us to choose Life. He wants us to know about the patterns of Evil and stay away from them. He wants us to understand the patterns of Life and embrace them. And as we do we will find ourselves becoming more and more people who can draw others to Him because of what He has done in our lives.

So choose Life.