



Sunday, June 22, 2025  
Luke 8:26-39 (Second Sunday after Pentecost)

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastor Tony Acompañado

Last Saturday I was down in Illinois to officiate the wedding of a friend's daughter. It was a glorious day, and the ceremony was especially beautiful ... given who the officiant was. The ceremony was followed by a lovely cocktail hour and then a fantastic dinner and reception. Although my wife was not able to attend because of a work commitment, I was perfectly fine going solo.

And as it turned out, lots of people wanted to talk to the family's "pastor friend" for one reason or another. A few of the guests in their early 20's asked if I'd consider traveling to do other weddings. Other guests wanted to comment about how much they enjoyed the ceremony itself, and others seemed to find this to be a safe space where they could air out their thoughts, feelings, and concerns about one thing or another.

Most of the conversations were lighthearted, but with one particular person the conversation took on a more serious, weighty tone – taking turns addressing one progressively challenging topic after another. And as this person brought their rant to a close, they said, pastor, I just don't know what to do, "*I'm at my wits end!*" And for whatever reason when they said this it struck a chord. And perhaps it's just me, but I'm about at my wits end when it comes to a lot of things taking place in our world right now.

Well in today's gospel that's exactly what we come across when a demon possessed man approaches Jesus and confronts him with the humblest and most raw of emotions. This man is broken and at his wits end. And when Jesus asks the man his name and he answers, "Legion" it breaks my heart because when he answers this way he defines himself by his deficits, his pain, his struggles and captivity. But this isn't who he really is – it's what has become of him, what has happened to him.

He's been stripped of himself and his humanity. His life has been shattered into pieces. He's been alienated from his life. And all this leaves him vulnerable, naked, and exposed. He no longer lives in a house in the city, but in the tombs. In essence, he's dead to himself.

Who amongst us doesn't know what that is like? One day we look in the mirror and say, "*Who are you? I don't even recognize you.*" Other days we say, "*I don't know what's happened to me. I'm just not myself today.*" Our minds are filled with conflicting thoughts and voices. There are times when we lose our bearings and no longer know who we are, what our life is all about, or what direction we're heading.

We silently wonder if we're going crazy. It's a time and place of separation, loneliness, and isolation. A time when we're exiled from ourselves and each other.

We *know* what this man's life is like. I'm sure each of us could tell about a time when our life was shattered and left in thousands of pieces that we just couldn't put back together. Shattered hopes and lost dreams. A crumbling marriage. The death of someone we love. An unexpected diagnosis. A life we desperately wanted but didn't turn out. We know what it is like to lose our self, our life, our name, and our identity. We know what it's like to be Legion.

I don't know *what* in your life has been shattered. I don't know all the thousands of pieces with which you live. I don't know the "Legion" of your life. I know that *you* know those answers, but I'm confident about *this*. Whatever it might be, it's the place to which Jesus comes. Jesus comes to the Legion of our lives. He did for the man in today's gospel, and he does for each one of us.



Sunday, June 22, 2025  
Luke 8:26-39 (Second Sunday after Pentecost)

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastor Tony Acompañado

Jesus steps out onto the land of this foreign country, the land of Legion. He comes to us as the one with inner clarity, focus, knowing, and understanding. He's the presence of unity and wholeness. He's the image of who we *are* and who we can *become*. That's why we continue to seek and follow Jesus as our teacher, guide, and savior. Because He is and has the life we want.

Jesus comes unafraid of death or the tombs in which this man lives. He's not distracted by the man's craziness. He's not repulsed by the man's nakedness or appearance. He's not limited by the chains and shackles that bind this man's life.

*“When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, shouting, at the top of his voice, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?’”*

Within that question are recognition and nonrecognition, likeness and unlikeness, sameness and difference. The man knows Jesus is nothing like him and yet, something within the man knows he is like Jesus. Something within him can still recognize Jesus; the divine one, the one who saves, the one who is whole, complete, and holy.

Despite the presence of Legion, the true image of this man was never completely lost or destroyed. It may have been taken over, covered up, forgotten, denied, or ignored but it was never absent. It was this true image, a reflection of Jesus himself, that recognized Jesus. And that's as true for us as it is the man in today's gospel.

Jesus stands before us as the mirror, the image, the truth-teller of who we really are. He gives us back ourselves. He reveals the original beauty of our creation. He stands before us with a truth that challenges us in the places in which our lives have become fragmented and distorted, in the ways in which we aren't true to ourselves, and in the times when our identity has been lost and shattered.

Jesus comes to the man seeing and knowing a truth about him that the man can neither see nor know for himself. How can he? He's been convinced that his name is Legion. But Jesus knows otherwise. And in the face of that truth the unclean spirit cannot remain. Legion can *never* be our final reality or ultimate identity. That will always be Jesus. That's the truth that commanded Legion to leave. That's the truth that puts life back together. That's the truth that clothed this man, returned him to himself, and seated him at the feet of Jesus.

Yes, we know what it's like to be Legion. We can tell that painful story of being at our wits end. However, for every story about Legion, there's a counter story. It's the story of our how our life was put back together, how we were given back our true identity, how we were seated at the feet of Jesus. It's the story Jesus wants told. The story we need to tell because others need to hear it.

It's as though we're meant to understand that healing and restoring the humanity of this man was worth the trip.

*“Return to your home and declare how much God has done for you.”*

Thanks be to God! Amen!