

**Sermon :: 17-May-2026**  
**Easter 7, Year A**

“ [Y]ou will be My *witnesses* ...  
to the ends of the earth ”

Once upon a time, there were two brothers: Josh and Jeremy. Josh and Jeremy came from a long, long line of story tellers. As far back as anyone could remember, their clan had made its living by wandering far-and-wide ... carrying to distant corners of the kingdom vast, vivid tales of people who lived a long time ago, in a galaxy—er, in a *land!*—far, far away.

And they were *good* at it! People clustered around them at the hearth, on winter evenings, as they spun their yarns ... lazed about them under the shade of a tree on warm afternoons while they spooled out their sagas ... vied for a chair—or even a spot on the *floor*—as they dished up their mesmerizing accounts for ‘dessert,’ after great holy-day feasts.

For many, many years, they made their separate circuits: always on the move. When one of them came to a village or hamlet, he’d stay for a week—maybe two, *tops*—and then move *on*: always leave the people wanting *more*, they’d say ... keep it *fresh* ... give’em something *new*, every night.

Now, Josh *loved* this itinerant life. Eight or nine months a year, he’d wander from place to place ... find an inn to ‘flop’ in ... pass the word that he’d come to town ... and by evening, people were lining up to hear him. Night after night, they’d slip Josh a couple pennies ... a skin of wine or a loaf of bread ... sometimes, if he was really lucky, even a jar of honey or oil. And Josh was *savvy*: As soon as he got even an inkling—a *whiff*—that folks were no longer hanging on his every word; that his message was growing a mite stale... he knew it was *time*: Next sun-up, he’d be off to the *next* town before most of the village was even awake.

And Josh wouldn’t *return* to a place for *years*. But his *stories* lingered *on* ... as the *townsfolk* told and retold the stories Josh had taught *them*. They’d tell them to each *other* ... to their *relatives* visiting from afar ... to *strangers* who were just passing through ... to *peddlers* and *tax collectors* making their rounds. Josh’s stories became known far-and-wide ... *well* beyond the circuit he *personally* made ... as people who heard them *repeated* them ... *shared* them ... even ‘*improved*’ them a little ... for *anyone* who’d listen. And so, Josh’s tales lived on for *generations* ... long, *long* after Josh had hung up his walking stick for good and on gone on the ‘great hearth in the sky.’

*Jeremy*, on the other hand, was cut from somewhat different *cloth*: more like a rooted tree than a creeping vine. After a dozen or so years ‘on the road,’ Jeremy’d grown very *weary*: always a new bed full of lumps ... new roommates who snored ... new food not to his taste. Jeremy decided there was a *better* way ... a less *demanding* way ... a more *stable* way ... to make a living. And so, every year, he’d choose one large town to *settle* in. He’d claim a prime spot near the center of town ... and then ‘perch’ there, night after night.

Now when Jeremy *first* got to town, the crowds were *large*—excited, even *heady*, for Jeremy was every *bit* the storyteller Josh was. But every year, as weeks became months ... the crowds *thinned* ... the smiles *stiffened* ... the once-generous tips *slimmed*. As large and varied as his repertoire was ... even *Jeremy* couldn’t tell a brand new story every night for months on *end!* And so, while he never *completely* wore out his welcome ... by the end of each long season, the townsfolk weren’t exactly sad to see Jeremy *go*, either. They knew all of his stories by *heart*, and they’d grown dull ...

repetitive ... kind of lifeless: so shopworn that even when the townsfolk tried telling them to strangers who *didn't* know them ... they just couldn't gin up a whole lotta passion or UMPH.

And so it came to pass that only a year or two after *Jeremy* died ... his stories died, *too*. Without fresh mouths to *tell* them or fresh ears to *hear* them ... they'd become only so many *more* words ... in a world already *full* of them.

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This Seventh Sunday of Easter, we find ourselves contemplating Jesus' *Ascension*: On the fortieth day after the *first* Easter, Jesus ... raised to life again, all-victorious over the powers of death ... ascended into Heaven and was seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty (A/Crd). Thus, these last ten days of Easter are known as *Ascensiontide*: the season-within-a-season when we reflect upon ... of all things! ... Jesus' *leaving* us ... leaving us *behind* ... leaving us on our *own*. Yes, yes ... the Holy Spirit comes and companions us, in grace, and we'll dwell upon *that next* week. But for *today*, I think ... the question begs to be asked: After triumphantly returning to *life* after a most harrowing *death* ... why doesn't Jesus hang *around* ... bask in His own *glory* ... delight in being among *His own*? Why, in other words, does Jesus choose to *leave* this world at precisely His most powerful, most crowning moment *in* this world?

The *theological* answers and explanations they teach in seminary are many and varied ... *and* mostly satisfying, in their own *intellectual* way. But there's *also* one that's a whole lot *simpler*—and eminently more *practical*—and that's this: Faith grows from hearing—and telling—the Christ story ... and Jesus simply can't tell His story all by *Himself*! The story of His life, Death and Resurrection ... the story of His Father's merciful, loving plan for humanity ... of the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life for our souls. If Jesus were to *linger* ... hang *around* ... *overstay* ... He'd grow *commonplace* ... endlessly repeating His same familiar tales over and over again, like *Jeremy*, to an ever dwindling, ever more listless crowd: a storyteller with a shopworn set that, sooner or later, no one feels much like hearing, anymore. And that's no knock on *Jesus*: *We grown-ups* (at least) eventually tire of hearing *exactly* the same stories ... told *exactly* the same way ... by *exactly* the same teller, over and over and over again.

So, in His moving *on* ... His *departing* ... *leaving* us wanting *more* of Him ... Jesus commissions *us*, as heirs of the Apostles: "*You will be my witnesses*"—My *heralds*, My *Good-News-spreaders*, My *story-tellers*—"to the ends of the earth." And so, Jesus, like *Josh*, ensures that *His* story ... the story of His *power* ... His *mercy* ... His *grace* ... His *peace* ... and, above all, His *love* ... will be retold *forever*: passed on by one enthusiastic generation of Christians after another ... as every *one* of us tells the Jesus-story in our own *language* ... from our own *experience* ... with our own *emphases*. ¶Some of us dwell on His saving us from a life of quiet—or maybe even loud—*desperation* and *despair*. ¶Some of us headline our abounding joy at the assurance of Life Eternal. ¶Some of us center on how serving *others*, in Jesus' Name, has transformed *our* lives. ¶Some of us muse on what it is to abide fully in His *grace*: in the Bread at this *Altar* ... in the love of *relationships* ... in the stillness of *prayer*.

Each of our unique stories '*tells*' differently, and *lands* differently, too ... and that's *OK*, for Jesus is All; therefore, *every* aspect of Him *we* lift up will *relate*—*speak to*—maybe even *save*—*someone*. The variety of our 'Jesus repertoire'... and the distinctiveness of our 'Jesus style' ... in *no way diminish* Him ... but, rather, *collectively*, compile a fuller, richer, more engaging *collection* of tales so large that no one could *ever* tire of hearing them.

And this is the reason Jesus, like *Josh*, leaves us ... moves on ... forges ahead. He's the *Master* Storyteller: He *knows* He's captured *our* hearts ... excited *our* spirits ... fired *our* faith ... and saved *our* souls. And so, we can't help but retell *His* story ... *our* story ... *our* story of *His* story ... to *anyone* who'll listen.

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What's *your* favorite story of Jesus in *your* life? Who's heard you *tell* it ... and when was the last *time*? For Jesus has made us *His* storytellers ... and we're surrounded by vast crowds of people *dying* to hear a story ... dying to hear *His* story ... dying to hear *our* story ... dying for us to tell them *our* story of *His* story: to be His *witnesses*, to the very ends of the earth.

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