

## COMISSION KARENA BOST: MISSIONS MINISTER

### INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Matthew chapter 12. Matthew 12. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to Matthew 12. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, Matthew 12 will be on page **817**.

### INTRODUCTION

So, today is one of those days where the text that we are in is directly linked with something that we are going through as a church.

- You've just heard from Gary Scheer,
- Who is starting a six-week Fathom Academy class
- on spiritual warfare this Wednesday.

AND today,

- in our regular walk through of the Gospel of Matthew,
- we come to a passage all about spiritual warfare.

Now, this wasn't planned,

- as in some sort of elaborate marketing scheme,
- that we would preach this text just as we are starting this class.
- BUT, when things line up like that,
- we'll just trust that God is up to something.

So, I'm calling this sermon **SLIDE THIS IS WAR!**

Now, I'm no expert on spiritual warfare,

- so, I'm just gonna say a few things about this,
- but I would implore you to sign up
- for our Fathom Academy Spiritual Warfare class,
- because this is stuff you're gonna want to know more about.

Additionally, I spent a lot of time this Spring going through Matt Chandler's preaching series on Revelation, which influenced my take on some of these topics.

So, THIS IS WAR. Let's go...Matthew 12, starting in verse 22:

**BLANK SLIDE**

## **MATTHEW 12:22**

[22] Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw.

## **EXPLAIN: DEMONIZED**

Now, here we have a demon-possessed man who Jesus heals.

And the question that I often get from people is:

*"Can a Christian be demon-possessed?"*

- So, note that the ESV translates this demon-possessed
  - which they do intentionally,
- because demon-possessed,
  - which the NIV uses,
  - is a tricky idea.

The Greek there is the word “*diazomai*” which literally means “*demonized*”.

So, to the question,

- can a Christian be possessed by a demon?
  - I would answer, no.
- But, can a Christian be “*afflicted by a demon*”?
  - Yes.

## TRANSITION

Now, what does this look like? We’ll get into that.

But, this man is **demon-oppressed** and Jesus casts out that demon.

Verse 23:

## MATTHEW 12:23-24

[23] And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” [24] But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”

## EXPLAIN: PHARISEES

The crowds believe GOD may be behind Jesus,  
But the Pharisees see only SATAN.

- They cannot deny that Jesus
  - just cast out demons,
- but they will not admit that God might be behind it.

There is only one recourse: it’s black magic.

Verse 25:

## MATTHEW 12:25-26

[25] Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. [26] And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?"

### EXPLAIN: SATAN DIVIDED

So, Jesus answers their thought, that he is in league with Satan, by saying:

- if Satan is casting out himself,
- then his kingdom would be characterized by internal discord
- and would self-destruct in a civil war.

### ILLUSTRATION: WRONG NUMBER

So, I feel like I've heard from God on a few occasions in my life. Not like an audible voice, per-se...but I've discerned that God was leading me in specific directions a few times in my life:

- I felt like God spoke to me a call into ministry.
- I felt like God spoke to me to marry Maryse.
- I felt like God spoke to me to plant this church.

You might say, "Are you sure? Couldn't it have been the enemy?"

And it's like, "Of course it was God!"

- *Commit my life to the church.*
- *Marry a beautiful Christian girl.*
- *Start a church. Preach the Bible.*

Like, if that was Satan...he got the wrong number."

## TRANSITION

Satan isn't in the business of furthering the Kingdom of God!

Jesus goes on, verse 27:

## MATTHEW 12:27-28

[27] And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. [28] But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

## EXPLAIN: REALLY?

Jesus now points out the true source of his ministry,

- saying that his power actually comes through the Holy Spirit.
  - It is not demonic power,
  - but divine presence
  - that has led to these authoritative demonstrations.

Now, as I was studying this section of scripture this week, I thought,

- man, if you're a guest with us,
- especially if you are new to Christianity...
- or maybe not a follower of Jesus,
- this could be weird!
  - Beelzebul.
  - The prince of demons.
  - A demon-oppressed man.
  - Satan.
- Do y'all really believe this stuff?

This sounds more like Dungeons and Dragons than the Bible and church!

- *“Is Jesus saying Satan is actually real? Really?”*
- *“Like, a real devil, with a tail; and horns; and a pitchfork?”*

Do we really believe this stuff?

## **EXPLAIN: ENLIGHTENED**

Well, we are all products of what historians call the Enlightenment.

And as post-enlightenment people we value:

- reason,
- rationality,
- linear,
- mathematic thought.

One of the byproducts is that most “enlightened” people

- don’t feel comfortable talking about supernatural stuff.
  - Angels, demons, cosmic spiritual warfare.

C.S. Lewis, one of the greatest thinkers in the 20th century, wrote some really great things about how to properly see these supernatural things.

- And in his masterpiece, *The Screwtape Letters*,
- which is a fictional book of letters from one demon to another,
- he writes this in the introduction:

### **SLIDE**

*“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”*

### **BLANK SLIDE**

So, one error when it comes to demonic activity is to think that everything is the devil.

- So, if you get a flat tire on the way to work,
  - it's not because you ran over a nail,
  - but because the devil was trying to get you.
- Some people think there's a demon behind every bad hairdo.
  - And some of you just have really bad hair!
- Someone once told me that the devil was thwarting their plans because they ran out of gas.
  - Nah...God gave you that gauge,
    - to show you when to fill it up before it hits 'E'.
  - I've run out of gas a few times.
  - It wasn't the devil...I was just being a dummy.

But the other error is to pretend that it doesn't exist, to ignore it altogether.

If there's any issue at all:

- it's medical,
- it's chemical,
- it's mental,

and there's no longer any consideration at all given to the demonic.

## POINT 1

So, let me make my first point here about this war we are in.

In this war **SLIDE SATAN IS REAL**

You can see from this verse that Jesus definitely believed Satan and the demons were real.

- In fact, Jesus seems to spend his whole ministry
- engaging with the devil and demonic forces.

Satan, the Devil, demons...that kind of stuff is mentioned 250 separate times in the New Testament.

- If you're going to take Jesus and the New Testament seriously,
- you have to take this war seriously.

Now, if you're newer to all this stuff...

- while we don't believe all the characterizations
  - of a red guy with pointy horns, a tail, and a pitchfork...
- we most definitely do believe in a real enemy
  - who is out to steal, kill, and destroy us
  - and all the God would want for us and from us.

### **EXPLAIN: LOOK LIKE?**

Now, back to the demon-oppression thing:

- listen, if you are in Christ...
- you can never be completely taken over by the enemy,
  - because, if you're a Christian,
  - your soul belongs to Jesus.
  - The Holy Spirit dwells in you.
  - You are saved and sealed in him.

**BUT the parts of you that you have not brought under the Lordship of Christ can be demonized.**



Now, how is this going to look? Because You say,

- *“Well, why isn’t he more obvious?”*
- *Demons seem a lot more visible in the Bible*
- *than they do today.”*

Well, J.D. Greear puts it like this:

**Satan isn’t after your recognition; he’s after your destruction.**

- He’s happy if he can destroy you,
- even if you don’t know it’s him doing it.
- And he’s really, really smart!
- And he’s been doing this thing way longer
  - that you’ve been around!

**Satan’s main objective is capturing the loyalties of men and women and diverting them away from the worship of God!**

- But, I think we really believe that the demonic is going to be
- something like we see in horror movies,
  - where your head is spinning,
  - and you’ve got green foam coming out of your mouth,
  - and you’re floating three feet above your bed.

But listen, Satan is smarter than that!

- He doesn’t need to do those spectacular things
- because he’s not trying to get you to believe in that!

**He just wants to get you to worship something other than Jesus... and he’s won!**

## ILLUSTRATION: WOLF

Listen, he's so subversive and tricky...

- he don't need to possess you...
- he can just afflict you in really subtle, but evil ways!
- It won't even feel like he's getting you.

I first heard this illustration from Joby Martin, and it's of how they deal with wolves in Alaska.

- Apparently, wolves are a real problem for Alaskans
- because they attack and kill their livestock.

Good thing we passed that law reintroducing them to Colorado

- so now WE can deal with this, as well.
- I know I'm not supposed to get political from the pulpit!

But the way they deal with wolves...

- isn't to shoot them,
- or hunt them down.

Rather,

- the Alaskans get a razor sharp knife,
- and they dip it in seals blood.
- And they let that blood freeze,
  - and then they dip it again,
  - and again,
  - and again,
- until the knife is completely covered like a blood popsicle.
- Then they bury the knife so the handle is hidden,
- and there is this tasty, seal blood treat.

And when a wolf comes and start licking it, he thinks,

- *“Oh man, free seal blood...you bet I will!”*
- But as the wolf licks the frozen blood,
- it numbs its tongue,
- but they keep going and keep going...

And soon their numb tongue reaches the razor sharp knife,

- but they can't feel it...

So, they keep going,

- and now there is more blood,
- but it's no longer seal blood...
- it's the wolf's blood.

And they will bleed to death as they are trying to swallow more and more, all the while unaware of what's going on.

## **APPLICATION**

This is how our enemy works. Listen to me...

- it's going to sound right!
- It's going to feel right!
- It's going to promise you something!
- But it's meant to get you to love something other than Jesus...
- and that thing will ultimately kill you!

This is how he works.

- He works through our devices,
  - beckoning us to try to satisfy our sexual cravings with pornography,
  - only to enslave us to worship our sexual addictions.
- He works through our jobs,
  - promising that if we give more of ourselves to our occupation,
  - we can find life to the full.
  - But we become worshippers of our accomplishments and careers.
- He works through getting you into debt,
  - by promising you that more stuff is what will satisfy you.
  - Only to enslave us.
  - We become worshippers of our things!
- He can even work through our kids...
  - by being under-involved, and just parenting on auto-pilot,
  - or by heaping expectations upon them and living vicariously through them...
  - teaching them that we're,
    - or God help us,
  - that they're more important than God.

Listen to me, being afflicted by Satan isn't going to look like the movies.

- He doesn't need to do that!
- He's already at afflicting you in areas
  - you haven't submitted to God!

It's you not being serious about holiness.

- You not being serious about your sin.
- You not being serious about the kingdom of God.
- That is Satan at work!

## TRANSITION

So yes, we really do believe in a real enemy...

- a real Satan...
- real demons...

But just know, they work in ways that are really, really insidious.

And this is what Jesus is saying!

- The Pharisees are accusing Jesus of casting out demons by Satan.
- And Jesus is like,
  - *"Are you serious!?! That's not how Satan works!"*
  - No, it's not Jesus who is using Satan.
  - It's Satan, who's using the Pharisees!

This leads me to the next verses. Verse 29-30:

## BLANK SLIDE

### MATTHEW 12:29

[29] Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.

## **EXPLAIN: STRONG MAN**

Ok, this is an enormous verse! Let's do some work on it.

First, the strong man. Jesus is saying that the strong man is Satan.

- And he has been bound.
- It's Satan's realm that is under assault
  - and in the process of being taken down.

This isn't a war where we are unclear who's going to win...ok?

- It's not like, "*Well, maybe God will win...*"
- *but then again, maybe Satan will claim victory.*"

**NO!**

- The enemy has been defeated...
- the Kingdom of God has come!
- And it is only a matter of time before the King will return,
- and the final battle will be over!

But in the meantime: Satan's been bound, and we are now able to plunder.

## **APPLICATION: PLUNDER**

- Now, how do we do that?
- How do we resist the devil?
- How do we plunder the enemy?
- How do we take advantage of the fact
  - that Satan has been bound?

Well, it's not in the ways you may think.

I've heard teachings on this

- where there's really explicit instructions
- on how to bind spirits and demons.

To cast them out you've got to directly address them

- and ask them their name,
- and with their name,
- claim some sort of mastery over them,
- and then bind them in the name of Jesus,
- and command them to never return.

And I've heard these, and they AGAIN conjure up, images of pop-culture movies like the exorcist,

- with some priest and some holy water,
- and some chick crawling on the ceiling
- with her eyes rolled in the back of her head.

And listen, maybe...ok? I'm not going to discount that totally... but I'm just not sure if that's the way most of us resist Satan.

When the Bible gives us instructions for engaging in spiritual warfare it's not really in weird, sensational ways.

You wanna know how to plunder the enemy? Here's how we do this:

**We embark in a serious pursuit of holiness.**

- Holiness is hating sin and loving righteousness.
- It's hating our sin!
- And it's hating sin to the point...
- that we would take any drastic step necessary...
- to put them to death!

Goodness, so many of us are still dealing with secret, indwelling sin.  
And some of you have been in church for decades, just hiding things!

- That addiction you pretend you've got handled.
- That affair that happened on a work trip 15 years ago, that you've just hidden away.
- You are so crippled by the shame of something from your past, and you think,
  - *"If I came clean what would my spouse think?"*
  - *What would my kids think?*
  - *What would my parents think?"*

And I'm just saying, if that's you, you'll never plunder the strong man,

- because he's got YOU!
- He's got you bound!
- He's got you right where he wants you!
- He doesn't need to possess you,
- cause he's already got your chained up...
- unable to do anything!

You will never get in this war...

- unless you're willing to seriously pursue holiness.
- You've gotta confess and repent.
- You've gotta drag that sin into the light.
- That's the only way it can lose its grip on you!



And listen, I know it's risky. You start confessing sin, and yeah, you can't control what collateral damage might come.

- You might have some really heavy work
  - with your spouse
  - or kids
  - or parents.
  - Maybe some counselling or therapy.

But right now, you're a slave! You're in bondage.

Dare I say it, you've been demonized!

- I can't tell you the weight lifted in my heart
- two-and-a-half years ago
- when it comes out that I'm plagiarizing portions of my sermons.

It made for some of the worst months of my life after that...

but it also set me free!

And then verse 30:

## **MATTHEW 12:30**

**[30] Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.**

## **POINT 2**

What Jesus just said is my second point.

In this war against Satan **SLIDE YOU AREN'T NEUTRAL**

There are no Switzerlands!

## YOU ARE NOT NEUTRAL!

- There isn't like one side of the field with the Jesus followers,
- and the other side with the Satan worshippers,
- and then a big mass of people who are on neither team. No!

**To be nominal is to be in league with the enemy.**

And you're like, *"Nah man, I don't worship the devil."*

- But that's because you think that involves pentagrams,
- and sacrificing virgins,
- and listening to Swedish death metal.

But that's not what Jesus is saying!

- If you are indifferent to the King of Kings,
  - to the Son of Man,
  - to the Spirit of God...
- then you are in league with the enemy.

This is what Jesus says. YOU AREN'T NEUTRAL.

## TRANSITION

And here's where he finally gets to what we know as the unforgivable sin.

Verse 31:

### **MATTHEW 12:31-32**

**[31] Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. [32] And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks**

against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

## EXPLAIN: UNFORGIVABLE SIN

Ok...the unforgivable sin:

- isn't murder,
- or suicide,
- or genocide,
- or rape.

The unforgivable sin isn't some technicality sin,

- where you're really being careful
- not to say something blasphemous of the Holy Spirit.
- Like if you say something about
- God the Father or God the Son you're ok,
- but the Spirit, man, that's it.
- Don't mess around with that.

It's not some weird thing like that!

Here's what I think the unforgivable sin is, and I get this straight from Grudem's Systematic Theology book:

- It is an outright rejection of God's work through the Spirit,
- and an extreme hardness of heart and lack of repentance.

Now, you may say, "*I'm in no danger of that sin.*"

- But all over the scriptures there are people
  - described as part of the church,
- who for all intents and purposes seem to be Christians...

I mean, Jesus even said as much back in Matthew 7 when he said:

**SLIDE** [22] On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' [23] And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' **BLANK SLIDE**

## APPLICATION

YOU AREN'T NEUTRAL. You see, there are people who are in churches all over the world today...

- Even here in this church,
- And they've been a part of all these Jesus things...
- but they don't really believe them...
- they haven't changed.

What Jesus is saying is essentially this:

- *"Look, if you've have seen the glory of Jesus*
- *and been convinced of the truth of His resurrection,*
- *only to return intentionally to your sin,*
- *what else is there left for you?*
- *If the Holy Spirit didn't convince you,*
- *what is there left to use on you?"*

If after hearing the gospel only more thorns of rebellion are produced in your heart, what else can be done?

- He's saying that every single sin committed can be forgiven...
- But if you don't respond to the Holy Spirit,
  - then no sin can be forgiven.

Listen, it makes sense to me if you walk away from all this Christianity stuff because you just don't believe it.

- What doesn't make sense to me is if you believe it...
- and then have an apathetic response to it.
- For it to affect your life "just a little"
- or for you to "casually" go to the church?

Sometimes we say that a person is a 'nominal Christian'...

- as in, they believe, yes,
- but it's just kinda not really that big a deal to them.

This is why I've been saying to you this whole series, you've gotta go all in with Jesus. **YOU ARE NOT NEUTRAL!**

### **POINT 3**

Now, let me end with this: it's my final point.

In this war, you must **SLIDE CHOOSE A SIDE**

Please get this:

- Jesus isn't saying all this stuff because he hates the Pharisees!
- NO! He loves the Pharisees!
- But he wants to save them!

And this is what he's doing today as well. Jesus is trying to save you!

**SATAN IS REAL.** And he's after you!

- Non-Christian, he's after you.
- Christian, he's after you.

1 Peter 5:8 says this: **SLIDE** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

## **BLANK SLIDE**

First thing to note...

- the Bible calls the devil a lion...
- which is in the cat family.
- Cat...devil...
- all I'm saying, is this is why I have a dog, yo!

But he's on the hunt!

- And, man, if he was a real lion, gosh!
- That'd make things so simple!

Listen, most of us in this room aren't dumb people. Alright?

- I'll give a little room for outliers,
- but I'm looking around, and...yeah.

But remember, our enemy is really good.

And you're never gonna come across some demonic compulsion that sounds like this:

- *"I'd like to just completely destroy your marriage.*
- *I'd like to give you depression and anxiety*
  - *like you've never felt before*
- *and leave you addicted to all kinds of perverse stuff*
  - *that you just can't get out from under!*
- *You want this?"*

I'm just guessing none of us are going,

- *"That's exactly what I've been looking for!"*
- *Yes please!"*

NO! He's smarter than that.

## ILLUSTRATION: TICK

It'd be so great if he'd just come at you like a lion...maybe we'd recognize that. But Chandler compares his work not to a lion...but to a tick.

Remember, demonized...demon-afflicted...so, a tick on a dog.

- Can that tick possess the dog?
  - No way! No chance!
- But can that tick, if left unaddressed,
  - get so big that the dog can get sick,
  - and weak,
  - and ultimately die?
- Absolutely!

## ENDING

This is our enemy:

- the nature of sin in your life and my life,
  - is that if it's undealt with,
  - if that sin is not repented of...
- then the nature of that sin is to take root
- and to grow and grow and grow
- and eventually destroy us.

But most of us don't even know we've got a tick...

- or we just think it's so small,
- so hidden from sight,
- that it's not a problem.

THIS IS WAR!

And you've gotta CHOOSE A SIDE.

Now, like I said in my intro,

- maybe you're new to this Christian stuff,
- maybe you're not a believer,
- and you came here with a friend today,
  - and I'm doing something weird like this...
- or maybe you've been here for a while...
  - like, gosh, for a long while.

But maybe what's happening today is that for the first time, by the grace of God, not by my preaching, but by the grace of God you're realizing what's actually going on.

- You see the war...
- and you see the enemy...
- and you see the scheme he's got you wrapped up in.
- And you want out!

So, here's the offer of the Gospel:

- Christ has come to save sinners.
- Jesus Christ has come plunder the strong man.



- To transfer you from the domain of darkness.
- To wash you.
- To clean you.
- To save you.
- You haven't committed the unpardonable sin yet.

Listen, if you're hearing this, and you have any desire to get out...you can.

You have not gone too far!

Maybe you're a Christian already,

- but you've got some areas you need to repent of.
- There're still some places where you're not fully surrendered,
- and you feel the tick of the enemy sucking there.
  - Pornography,
  - workaholism,
  - jealousy,
  - secret sin.

Today is the day to confess and repent.

- Man, talk to someone you came with.
- Come talk to me after we're done here.
- Don't leave here without making some war on the enemy.

And if you don't yet believe...today is the day of salvation!

- CHOOSE A SIDE!
- You just pray, "*Jesus, I give you my life.*"
- This is the first step to plunder the enemy.

THIS IS WAR! May the Lord help us!

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

## RESOURCES USED:

- Berkhof, Louis. Systematic Theology.
- Carson, D.A. Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary.
- Chandler, Matt. *Revelation Series*.
- Greear, J.D. *I Saw Satan Fall Like Lightning*.
- Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology.
- Osborne, Grant R. Matthew: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.