

INTRODUCE

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

Alright, Matthew 12 is where we're going to end up, but I want you to start with me in John chapter 1. So, if you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to John chapter 1. John 1. That's where we're going to start.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to John 1. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, John 1 will be on page **886**.

INTRODUCTION

I'm calling today's sermon: **SLIDE FOCUS ON THE FAMILY**

- I actually saw a really funny bumper sticker,
- And I wanted to rip it off for this sermon title,
- cause it said FOCUS ON YOUR OWN *BLEEP* FAMILY...
- which just made me laugh...
- but it really wasn't sermon title appropriate.

But FOCUS ON THE FAMILY.

The dominant idea used in the New Testament when it comes to Christian community is that of family.

- But what does that mean?
- Well, let's get into it.

So, some theology to start, and then some practical application at the end.

Here we go. John 1. **BLANK SLIDE**

JOHN 1:1

[1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Ok. In the beginning was the Word, and notice the Word is capitalized.

- So, what are we talking about here?
- Who is the Word?
- Jesus. Yep.

So, John is saying that...

- Jesus was in the beginning.
- Jesus was WITH God.
- And Jesus WAS God.

Now...

- you cannot be with something...
- and simultaneously be something.

Ok? That's insane.

- I cannot claim to be with my wife...and be my wife.
- I cannot claim to be with myself...and be myself.
- That's a personality disorder, right?

So, John is claiming something here. Look down to verse 18.

JOHN 1:18

[18] No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Who is this “the only God, who is at the Father’s side” referenced here?

- Jesus. Correct again.
 - If you’re new to church
 - you can pretty much always guess Jesus,
 - and you’ll be close to right.

Now, in the Greek, this text literally reads:

- *“No one has ever seen God;*
- *the only begotten God,*
- *who is in the Father’s bosom.”*

at the Father’s side AND in the Father’s bosom, are very different things.

ILLUSTRATION: KYLE’S BOSOM

So, our youth minister, Kyle, he’s a great friend of mine.

- I’ve known him for 15 years.
- He was my intern at the first church I was a youth pastor at.
- He was at my wedding.
- I officiated his wedding.

I love this guy dearly. And I don’t ever mind being at his side...

but I want no part of his bosom.

- I don’t even really know what his bosom is or where to find it...
- I actually thought about calling this sermon ‘Bosom Buddies’...
- but again...not appropriate...

This is why it’s translated it as **side**. Cause the idea of bosom is lost on us.

But John is saying that Jesus **is in the bosom of the Father**, as in,

- there is an intimately familiar entanglement
- between God the Father and God the Son.
- Theologians use the word “substance.”
- They are of the same substance.
- But they are two distinct persons.

Now, turn all the way back to Genesis 1. Genesis 1.

- If you don't know where that is.
- Genesis means beginning.
- And 1...is the first number.

GENESIS 1:1

[1] In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

What were those first three words? **In the beginning**. And what were the first words in John 1? **In the beginning was the Word**. Yeah! John 1 is a nod to Genesis 1. Now down to verse 26.

GENESIS 1:26a

[26] Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

POINT 1

Now, that's not a typo. That's not a mistranslation.

- Let us.
- After our.
- Us.
- Our.
- Who is God talking to?

Now, you may know that the Bible doesn't mention the Trinity...

- and yes, the word "Trinity" isn't used...
- but the doctrine is alive and well all over the scriptures.

So, God, in his very nature, is in a community...a family, as it were.

That's my first point today. **SLIDE GOD IS COMMUNITY**

- And I don't have time to go into the Holy Spirit this morning.
- But God is in a perfect intimate relationship with God's self!
 - God the Father,
 - God the Son,
 - and God the Spirit.
 - All in community.
 - All at one another's side.
 - All in one another's bosom...as it were.

TRANSITION

Now, in Genesis 2, God has created and created and created, and each time he saw what he created and it was good, and it was good, and it was good. But then he creates man, and look at Genesis 2:18

GENESIS 2:18

[18] Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

So, the first time in creation that something **is not good**...

- Is when God creates man.
- And man is alone.
- And God says, “*Nope. Not good.*”
- *This guy needs some help.*”

The first thing that’s not good in all of creation, is a lack of community for the man.

And this is where Coloradoans get it wrong:

- Your dog is not sufficient community!
- Your cat—aside from being likened to Satan—is not sufficient!

God is creating mankind in his image,

- and that image is one of perfect community,
- so, when the man is alone,
 - that is, not in community,
- he is out of step with God’s image.

Down to Genesis 2:21:

GENESIS 2:21-22

[21] So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. [22] And the

rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

POINT 2

Ok, let's geek out for a minute more. It says that God took one of his ribs...

- that word translated rib,
- can also mean side.
- Jesus was in the Father's side...

So too, he took woman from the man's side.

- From the same stuff...
- the same substance.

Ok, all of that is to show you that from page 1 of the Bible, we find that GOD IS COMMUNITY.

AND that we are created by him, to be in relationships.

And that's point 2: **SLIDE WE ARE CREATED FOR COMMUNITY**

- The center of reality is a community.
 - God the Father,
 - God the Son,
 - God the Spirit.
 - Sharing in trinitarian love.
- And we are created in that image!

Now, all of that is set up for us to move into our text for today. So, turn to Matthew chapter 12.

This is the last time you'll have to turn somewhere in your Bibles today...I promise.

We've spent a full month on this chapter, and we're finally going to finish this chapter off this morning.

So, in Matthew 12, Jesus is going to tell us what the community we are created for is like, starting in verse 46.

BLANK SLIDE

MATTHEW 12:46

[46] While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him.

CONTEXT

Now, remember what the last few chapters have been all about:

- Jesus has been calling his followers...his disciples...
- to a very high bar of what it means to follow.

To be a part of the way of Jesus...

- was to lay everything down.
- It was complete allegiance.
- It was a complete change in identity.
- The cost of discipleship was high.

And as Jesus has continued his ministry, opposition has been mounting, especially in chapter 12, from the Pharisees, the religious elite.

And now, in verse 46, Jesus' mother and his brothers...his family... show up and want to speak with him.

EXPLAIN: PATRILINEAL

Now, we need to do a little work on the family in the first century. Family at this time in history worked in what is known as a Patrilineal line system, which simply meant that a family's blood line was traced through the father's lineage.

- We saw this in Matthew chapter 1,
- where the genealogy of Jesus is given.
 - Abraham was the father of Isaac,
 - and Isaac the father of Jacob,
 - and Jacob the father of Judah.
 - And on and on and on until Jesus.

And in the Patrilineal system, property and rights and names and titles are all passed down from father to son.

Family was everything! And it was passed from Father to Son.

Now, did you notice someone missing in verse 46?

- Jesus' family shows up, but who's missing?
- Joseph! Yeah.
- Jesus' dad isn't there.

Since Joseph is not mentioned anywhere after Jesus' childhood,

- the most natural conclusion
- is that he died some time earlier.

We'll see this confirmed when Jesus is on the cross and he entrusts his mother, Mary, to the disciple that he loved, John, to care for her.

So, Jesus' family show up. And look what happens. Verse 48:

MATTHEW 12:48

[48] But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” [49] And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! [50] For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

So, what Jesus just did here is radical!

- Jesus is the oldest living son.
- And based on the patrilineal system of his day,
- he should take up the mantle of responsibility for his family.
- He is all the more important to his family after Joseph’s death.

And what does he say? **Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?**

- He redefines his family as not his flesh and blood, but rather,
- **whoever does the will of my Father in heaven.**
- Jesus calls his disciples family.
- That would have been shocking!

To put this new family ahead of his patrilineal family would have been shocking.

- To us, it doesn’t quite pack a punch
- Because we live in a world with weak family ties,
- we are very mobile,
- people move away from family and hometowns very often.

But in Jesus’ culture, what he is saying would have been unthinkable.

POINT 3

Conservatives like to point out the pro-family messages of Jesus, which are good and right...

- marriage,
- children,
- honoring parents, etc.
- These are good things.

But scholars also point out that Jesus makes some claims that seem very anti-family, like this one.

Yes, FOCUS ON THE FAMILY...but you better define family like Jesus does.

And it's point 3: **SLIDE THE COMMUNITY OF JESUS IS FAMILY**
The Apostle Paul, in his New Testament writings, uses the metaphor of adoption. We are adopted into God's family as sons and daughters.

- We call God our Father, just like Jesus did.
- Jesus is called our brother...that's kinda weird to think about.

THE COMMUNITY OF JESUS IS FAMILY.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

And here is where our Western, individualistic society leads us astray.

Because we are told:

- it's just you and Jesus...

- and you don't need to go to church to be a Christian.
 - You can just podcast your favorite preacher...
 - and listen to worship on Spotify...
 - and have some Christian friends...
 - and you go to church whenever you feel like it...
- But you don't need to belong to a place.
- And you don't need to be committed to a people.

ILLUSTRATION: TRANSACTIONAL

Many of us treat Christian Community more like fans than family.

We're fans of this preacher or that church.

But that's a transactional relationship. It's, *"I like what you do."*

You can treat me like that...transactionally:

- *"I like your sermons, Chris."*
- *"I like your church, Chris."*
- *"I like what you do, Chris."*

But I can treat you like that, too!

- *"I like that you're filling a seat."*
- *"I like you giving and serving."*
- Or, here's an honest one from me: *"I like that you like me."*

But that's all transactional.

- Family is not transactional...it's covenantal.
 - It's not, *"I like what you do."*
 - It's, *"I like you."*

And so, we don't run when the transaction isn't meeting expectations.

And I love you...

- but if that's you...
 - and I don't want you to feel judged...
- but you think that way because you have been taught,
 - or dare I say...you've been disciplined...
- by Western, hyper-individualistic culture
- to believe that's how church is supposed to work.

But listen to me:

- You did not get that belief from Jesus
- You did not get that belief from the Bible
- You did not get that belief from church history

This is a very specific, contextualized belief

- based almost entirely
- in WHERE we live
- and WHEN we live.

Jesus' vision for his gospel community...for church...

- isn't an event you attend,
- or content you consume,
- but a family you belong to.

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APPLICATION: FRIENDS?

So, if this is what the Bible teaches about community as family, what do we do with this?

- Well, the problem about family
- is that, for better or worse,
- your family is your family.

This is the difference between family and friends.

And this is one of the things that's really important when thinking about church community as family.

- Listen, your community at Fathom...
- doesn't necessarily have to be your friend group.

If it works out that way, great!

- But friendship is based on chemistry,
- personality,
- stage of life...
- and none of that is bad at all...
- but it is limited.

When people approach church that way and expect friendship,

- sometimes it works, and it's great when it does!
- But more often than not, it doesn't...
- or, at least it doesn't work in the way we expect it to...
- and I think that's ok, and good to its own extent.

Because if church is supposed to be family...

- well, you may share a ton in common with your family...
- and then again, you may be complete opposites!
- But you still go to Thanksgiving.
- They're still family.

- And unless there is some egregious,
- ongoing,
- sinful behavior that is toxic,
- basically, family is for life.

Now, we'll talk about how that translates to church community.

But first, Pastor John Mark Comer gives some stages of community, that I think are helpful. Like, the stages of breaking into a new group or church.

STAGES OF COMMUNITY

The first stage of community is the **SLIDE HONEYMOON STAGE**

In this stage everything is awesome.

- *"We love everyone in our group.*
- *And we've hung out three times this week.*
- *And we're texting all the time,*
 - *And grabbing coffee,*
 - *and going to movies together."*
- And we are just pumped for everyone.
- And we tag little Christian phrases, like,
 - #DOING LIFE TOGETHER!

Right? But that honeymoon stage is normally based on friendship...

Or maybe it's more like an awkward honeymoon...

- you're all new,
- and unsure of yourselves,
- and you don't really know each other well.

You've got, like, baby giraffe wobbly legs!

And you feel like you've got nothing in common other than Jesus.

- And it's like an awkward honeymoon of sorts,
 - where you're nervous
 - and awkward
 - and it's all new.

And sometimes people bail on a group cause they don't gel immediately...

But you can't judge a marriage by how a honeymoon goes...

On my honeymoon in Mexico...

- I passed out in the bathroom...
- got a mild-concussion...
- Needed an anti-diarrheal...
- And then needed stool softeners
 - to reverse the previous medication...

14 ears and going strong!

You can't judge a marriage by a honeymoon...

and you can't judge community by how the first season goes.

So, stick with it.

But then you eventually move through the honeymoon to the

SLIDE ORDINARY STAGE

Now, don't hear the ordinary stage as a bad thing, ok!

- When did we get so down on ordinary?
- Everything's gotta be special...
- Every event has to be fantastic!

Ordinary is really just when you settle in, and you're like,

- *"Yeah, group is good.*
- *Every Wednesday.*
- *We know each other.*
- *We're walking together.*
- *Nothing too high.*
- *Nothing too low.*
- *It's just ordinary."*

And sometimes people bail on community here because...

- it's just not interesting enough...
- It's not intense enough...
- It's not fresh enough. ..
- It's actually, kinda boring.

But listen...most of family life is just ordinary.

- It's just waking up
- and eating together,
- and going to school or work,
- and coming home,
- and hanging out together,
- and eating something else together,
- and watching something together,
- and then back to sleep.

That's ordinary!

But if you stick with community in the ordinary you inevitably hit a rough patch...and I call this the **SLIDE CONFLICT STAGE**.

And conflict comes in two forms: FRUSTRATION or FEAR.

- As you get more and more comfortable with each other,
 - you will begin to share more,
 - and get more open and transparent...
 - and the real you comes out!
- And it turns out that the real you has some issues.
- And the real me has some issues!

Or you start to figure out certain things about certain people...

- Like, that person voted for who?
- Why doesn't that person discipline their kids more?
- Oh my goodness, that person is always complaining about their life during prayer requests!

And it can lead to some FRUSTRATION.

Or it might show up as FEAR...

- like you start to dig a bit deeper,
- and it's more than,
 - *"Well, did you like the sermon?"*
 - *"Oh, Chris' story was so funny."*

Now it's bearing you soul

- and carrying heavy stuff for one another.
 - And whether you fear others,
 - or you fear yourself in those things,
- it's conflict.

And this is where a lot of people bail because of FRUSTRATION or FEAR.

- It just gets too hard.

But if you will stay put...

- stay committed...
- embrace the conflict...

you will move to the final stage which I'll call the **SLIDE LOVE STAGE**

In the love stage,

- you being to accept people in their differences,
- in their struggles,
- in their pains,
- in their lives,
- and you find yourself saying...
 - *"Man, I really love these people.*
 - *I never would have thought it would work out...*
 - *with that awkward honeymoon,*
 - *and all those boring bible studies,*
 - *and man, if he gets on his soap-box*
 - *about politics one more time I'm gonna snap!*
 - *But gosh, I love these guys."*

And you push in. And that's family.

BLANK SLIDE

LEAVE

Now, there are times to leave a church, just like there are times to distance yourself from certain persons in your family.

- There are times to find a new church,
- there are times for that...ok.

But our cultural problem

- isn't that people are staying places too long...
- it's that they're leaving places too soon.

But as a general rule: **those who stay, are those who grow.**

I say it like this all the time:

- **The grass isn't greener somewhere else.**
- **The grass is greener where it's watered.**

CONCLUSION

So, we're about six weeks away from summer being over, and listen,

- I know that coming out of COVID,
- and this summer has been kinda like a make-up...
- for trips and vacations and all that.

But I really think we need to be intentional about working out some of the muscles that may have atrophied during the last two years.

- **We got really good at NOT being in community during COVID.**
- **But we need to exercise our community muscle.**

So, starting today, until Labor Day, we're opening registrations for our Fall groups.

We've got Discipleship Groups

- that are mixed age and stage groups
- meeting in homes all throughout the week.

And we have women's and men's bible studies

- that meet at Fathom on Tuesday nights.

Church, I want to encourage us to flex our community muscle.

- So, we've got early bird sign-ups live at
- **SLIDE FATHOMCHURCH.ORG/FALL**

And I just want to commend you

- to consider watering the grass where you are this year.
- Jump into this family,
- and let's embrace the awkward.

ILLUSTRATION: ANIMAL PLANET

Now, I know I used this illustration just last year, but I want to end with it once again today.

- We spent the last two weeks looking at Satan,
- and demons,
- and spiritual warfare.

And you've gotta understand that we do have a real spiritual enemy who wants to take us out. 1 Peter 5:8 says this: **the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

Now, which animal does a prowling lion always go after?

Come on now! You've seen the Animal Planet...

- You see that lion prowling around in the grass,
- and then a herd of antelope,
- but then they zoom in on that one,
 - gimpy,
 - three-legged,
 - tripod antelope
 - hanging on the outside of the herd...
- or that little baby antelope barely standing...

Well, you know what's coming next!

It's like,

- *"Kids, change the channel..."*
- *"this is not going to end well."*

This is not a Disney movie...ok?

- In the Disney movies the parents die
- and the kids live...

But the people at Disney are liars and the truth is not in them!

That's not how it works!

- See, that lion, is looking for the easy target.
- The young and the weak.

But this is why God created animals with the herd instinct!

- Because it's the herd that surrounds,
- and protects,
- and shelters the weak...

APPLICATION

So, watch out church. **Because the enemy prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.**

And let me tell you who he devours.

- He devours that disconnected person.
- He devours that person who comes to church,
 - but nobody knows,
 - because you're not connected in any meaningful way.

You see, sometimes people say things to me like,

- *"Well, I just don't know everyone here anymore.*
- *I used to know everybody, but now I don't!"*

And I can appreciate the sentiment...but I think it's flawed!

- If you're bringing your friends...
- And I'm bringing my neighbors...
- And someone finds us online...
- Then there will always be new people to our community...
- And you won't know them!

The point of church is not for you to know everyone.

The point is for everyone to be known.

Listen, you can't know 250 people well enough to be a herd for them!
But you can know 12.

You see, what our church ought to be about is:

- When we have a newer Christian or wounded person shows up
 - we take them in
 - and we put them in the middle of the herd.
 - And we say,
 - *“Get in here!*
 - *It’s safer in here.*
 - *The enemy...that lion...can’t get to you in here.”*

ENDING

Man, I’ve had seasons where I’ve been on the inside of that herd...

- just busted up
- and broken
- and barely able to stand on my own two feet,
- and you, my church,
- my family...
- you held me up.

And that’s what we want to be. Family for one another.

This isn’t complex, church.

- Some theology is really complex and difficult to apply.
- This isn’t complex...but it is hard.

So, may you want it deeply enough to pursue it.

And may God, who created you in his image, be merciful to grant it to you.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

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
- PRAYER - 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:

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