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SPEAKERS

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Good evening. Those of you who braved the night to come here have been doing a series of talks on the precepts. And tonight normally wouldn't be the night to talk about not lying. However, hopefully I didn't lie without doing it today. Since it is Halloween, I thought I'd give a topical talk about fear and demons and mostly references to the suttas the discourses of the Buddha on these on this topic? And maybe you'll be there really frightened by time the evenings over? Maybe not. There's one discourse with the Buddha talks about fear quite a bit. And he talks about the conditions that give rise to fear. And in here, the example he gives is for people who go into the forest, the dark, deep, haunted forest, and what would be the cause the conditions for fear rising, going into the woods into the forest. And rather than being the goblins and the ghosts, the witches in the forest, these are the conditions for the arising of fear that he lists up there's a whole long list and it goes abbreviated soon but it starts off Whenever rec rec loses or Brahmins, impure ified and bodily conduct resort to remote jungle ticket tickets, resting places in the forest, that owing to the defect of their own purified bodily conduct, these good recluses and Brahmins evoke unwholesome fear and dread. So people are if your conduct your physical conduct your actions have been impure and been causing transgression of contract contracts for transgression that causes harm to people breaking the precepts, for example, that's a condition for going into the woods and feeling afraid. And he says he says the same things for verbal conduct if you're on purified and in verbal conduct, conduct or in mental conduct. If a person if they're reckless or brahmans, is covetous or full of lust, that's a condition for giving rise of fear And dread going into the forest. If the mind is if the person has the mind of ill will, and intentions of hate. Those are the conditions for giving rise to fear. If there's a mind that is filled with sloth and torpor, or with restlessness and unpeaceful, lists in mind, in uncertainty and doubting if a person is given to self praise and despair, disparagement of others, if a person's desirous of gain honor and renown the person is lazy or wanting an energy unmindful and not fully aware and concentrated and restraining minds. It's quite a list. So those are the causes and conditions of getting frightened on Halloween night. If so, here the emphasis is on the state of your mind, state of your behavior in your conduct. as being the primary condition for the rising of fear and dread, and that's, we take that as a challenge because many people

fear something we think of, we're afraid of external conditions are afraid of, you know, we lock our doors at night because we're afraid otherwise, what might happen and, and here it is, wants to make the argument that the primary conditions for fear are these you know, what we do with our with our own behavior in our own minds. And if we care for the well and develop the opposite of these qualities, then we're less likely to be afraid. So I'll leave that for you to think about how the connection is between your mental state and your capacity or your tendency to feel afraid or anxious or worried. Now there might be real things to be afraid of so what are the things we can be afraid of? And you probably each of you probably have your own Favorites list of things that you're afraid of. And but again, here's it's very interesting, what the Buddha does on fear, the things to be afraid of. The thing that's probably the most frightening thing in the world is not the Frankenstein's roaming the streets. But rather, is your own mind. And that's, uh, you know, I say that a little bit rhetorically to make a point. And I don't think probably most of your minds are not that frightening. But it's the forces in your own mind that you have the most cause to be afraid of is the causes is the forces in your own mind, which are the forces which are going to lead to your to your suffering, to your detriment in some kind of spiritual way. There might be physical things in the world, the activities in the world, people in the world that might cause you physical harm. And certainly that's something to be apprehensive about and concerned about. But even when people do physical damage to you, the argument in Buddhism is a challenge. And you can certainly argue back and you can disagree with this. But the argument is that your spiritual life is really in your your hands, and what you do, how you how you respond psychologically or mentally, to what happens to you. It can be the conditions for suffering, and can be the conditions for the lack of suffering maybe to confer happiness. And so and so, the point here is that what you have most to fear isn't spiritually, spiritual well being is not what the conditions of the world are, but rather, the conditions again and how your mind will respond to what goes on no would you withdraw your response and activities of your own mind? Now, it's very interesting that in the teachings of the Buddha, these forces in your mind or inside of us inner forces that we have the most to fear are personified in a figure called Mara. And probably some of you have heard about Mara. So Mara is the Buddhist devil, or dandi, kind of archetypical demon. And in the form of more of, of this Mara, it's as seen as a personification of these forces Mara is the is the external externalization of forces in our own minds external image we have or what goes on in our mind. And so it's very interesting that the Buddha should talk about Mara, because it's quite unique in the history of Indian religions, for actually Asian religions, for a religion to have a devil like figure. We know that in other religions that are a little bit further to the west on the globe, and that in Judaism, Christianity, and I think in Islam, there is a devil, Satan that plays a very important role. And this is one place where Buddhism and these theistic religions of the West have share a common element in having this kind of figure of the devil or the This, this, Mara. But how we understand, Mara is very important, and mostly in the teachings of the Buddha, Mara can best be understood as being a personification of inner psychic forces. Now why personify these forces of greed Hate the delusion so forth? And one of the reasons, I think, is that some of the forces of greed that we have lost some of the forces of hate hostility, ill will some of the forces of confusion fear that we might have a seem to arise bubble up inside of us, without our choosing them. Where'd that come from, you know, you see minding your own business, you're going down the street. And suddenly, you're overwhelmed with this, you know,

these desires arise or these fears arise, and these things arise. And sometimes a little bit hard to feel like you're responsible for them or that you were the identify with this is this is me, this is certainly on me in the sense that the part of me that I have control over that I can choose if I was going to choose, those parts wouldn't be there. And so it's kind of the per se talking about Mara as something external, for myself. At least symbolically, it's kind of pointing out that this is something that's outside of your job. Direct choice and control, it's something that seems a little bit surprising that it should arise is powerful forces you'd rather not have be there. And so Buddhist practice in some ways is learning how to deal with these forces that we'd rather not be there we'd rather not own we'd rather not wish that we wish they weren't there if we didn't have these forces that that if we could just control our lives control our inner life psychological well that's enough no more I don't need any of that anymore then we would all be enlightened within you know a few minutes at it but we don't have that ability these these powerful forces moving through us often that we don't you know, sometimes can know how to deal with right get a handle on you get a small example of this is especially people who are new to meditation is try to control your thinking mind. You know, if you if you could be in charge of your thinking mind you just stop it your mind with thoughts up thinking and you'd be dwelling in peace, but you can't do that so easily. And there's a kind of your mind has a mind of its own. So this idea of Mara is this thing this is a part of the mind has a mind of its own, but forces within us which are kind of which are not, you know, we don't necessarily identify with ourselves. Sometimes, when I've taught, I've liked it, I've distinguished between two forms of two ideas of freedom. One idea is the idea of freedom to freedom to do whatever you'd like, the freedom to vote, the freedom to own property, the freedom to speech, a lot of these great freedoms we have in America, the freedom to, if that's the emphasis, the freedom, kind of a right to do things can lend itself can kind of shade on very quickly until it becomes some like the freedom to shop. You know, I just want to I don't have any limitations on my life. I have these these this Dyer's these wishes and what I want, and real freedom is when there's no limitations on my desires, and I could just shop until I drop in or just, you know, just, you know, follow through in every possible desire I have. The Buddhist idea of freedom is not freedom to put freedom from. And so here it's freedom from the compulsion. So this compulsion to shop, then is to have free from that compulsion. So then we're not driven by forces, which are not our choosing. So freedom from fear, freedom from the forces of hate, and that's really the emphasis versus take away or freedom from that which moves through us we'd rather not be there. So do so the Buddha The Buddha was visited by Mara, repeatedly. And some of you may be and never been visited by Mara. You don't think about the use of those ideas those terms. But the Buddha was visited by Mara max to suggest that the strength which Mara existed for the Buddha, was probably in direct proportion to the strength of his spiritual seeking his spiritual exertion, spiritual endeavor and he was engaged in from all we can tell. He was incredibly resolved and dedicated to pursue his spiritual life, to follow that spiritual life to the end. And without him having done what he did, we wouldn't be here today. That's something there's something very powerful significant that he discovered, that apparently no one had discovered before him in the same kind of way. Powerful possibility of freedom of purification of the heart of liberation. And it was not an easy thing for him to have discovered. And he spent many years practicing many different spiritual traditions. And he was really dedicated, determined to do it all the way. He talks about this as being going against the current of why didn't see this fine what the currents was, but he said, the

spiritual path is going against the currents that you're going on to River. It's easy to float down the river. But to go up rivers quite hard, you have to paddle hard and strong currents. It's really hard. So you know, sometimes people say it's, it's against the pop currents of popular culture, popular cultures of, you know, consumerism, for example, or hate or there's many forms of popular culture which are not so exemplary. And it's very easy to get pulled into those and get, you know, it's easiest sometimes just to kind of follow along with popular culture where it goes, than it is to go against them. Sometimes it's seen as the currency of greed, hate and delusion in our own our own mind. It can be easier just to follow along with those than it is to say no to those say, No, thank you, I'm not going to follow those, I'm actually going the other direction. Not only am I going to do that, I'm going to go in other direction, I'm going to cultivate the opposite of it, I'm going to really cultivate the capacity to let go and be free of them. So the Buddha was very determined to do something that he had no examples that anybody had done before him. And this something about maybe he was a very passionate man. You know, maybe he was so passionate people, sometimes they're these forces of greed, hatred, delusion, these currents come through them very powerfully. And so he had to somehow muster tremendous effort to somehow find himself to go against the current in his own mind in the popular minds or wherever currents of his families rather than wanting to go off and become a monk. And so he had to somehow work against currents that in order to follow a spiritual life. And if we see some of these currents as being the internal currents that are already struggling with then I think some of these is what he calls Mara. Some of these forces Mara, the word Mara comes from the, from the root mer, which means death. And some people have translated word Mara as deadening, the deadening forces in our psyche, those forces which are against life that go against freedom in life. And it's a little bit counterintuitive because we think sometimes if I can just follow my desires, there's life, there's energy there, I'll just be so happy. But some forces we follow, and they didn't notice. We've become numb. So for example, it's quite obvious like alcohol There's a pursuit that desire into a certain kind of vitality that comes initially. But it's kind of deadening in the long term long term. So there's a number of desires that we can follow, that are maybe deadening forces in us that lead to our downfall that lead us not to freedom, but to greater enslavement or something. So this is the kind of language that sometimes the Buddha used talk about the spiritual life, making this this very strong distinction between two directions that you can go in your life. In a demo, Pato, there's these verses where he says vigilance is the path to the deathless negligence, the path to death. The vigilant do not die, the negligent or as if already dead. That's quite strong. You know, to say that vigilance can be almost synonymous with mindfulness. Mindfulness is the path to the death. Plus, mindlessness is the path to death. The visual, the mindful, do not die, the mindless or as if already dead. If you're not attentive and present and awake to your life, there's something about that which is deadening or someone's death already there to spend a lifetime lost in confusion lost in thought lost in fantasy. There's something about the vitality and life is not quite there in the same way. So, Mara, when the Buddha was sitting on the banks of this river, in India, on the brink of his enlightenment, rivers cold and dead on Ganga. He wrote this, he said this about his, his period of practice, his period of exertion. Sorry, the Buddha said to me read elude in exertion Yeah, the river net Anja making a great effort practicing meditation to attain the rest from the burden. Mara came speaking words of compassion. That's really interesting. Tomorrow, Mara, this devil comes speaking words of compassion. And sometimes these voices inside these voices

concerns these drives inside of us can seemingly have our best interest in mind. And Mara says compassionately, concerned about the Buddha, you are ashen, then death is in your presence. So the Buddha had practice very seriously very intensely, almost like as an ascetic for many years. So you can imagine he's kind of maybe quite quite a week. You were ashen, then death is in your presence. Death has 1000 parts of you. Only one part is your life. Only 1% of life still left. Live good sir. Life is better. Alive, you can do acts of merit. You're living the holy life. You're living the holy life performing the fire sacrifice will heat up much merit. What uses exertion to you? Hard to follow the path of exertion, hard to do hard to sustain? saying these verses Mara stood in the awakened one's presence. And to that Morrow speaking does, the Buddha said relative of the heatless one's evil one. Come here for whatever purpose? I haven't. I haven't premiere it. I haven't come here for to attain merit, even the least bit I'm sorry, relative of the heedless ones, evil one. I haven't for merit, even the least bit of need. Those who have need of merit. Those are the ones Mara's fit to address in me our conviction, austerity, persistent disk discernment. Why? When I'm so resolute Do you petition me to live? This wind could burn up even river currents. Why when I'm resolute? Shouldn't my blood dry away? As my blood dries up, Gall and phlegm dry up? As muscles waste away the mind goes clear, mindfulness to sermon concentration stand more firm, staying in this way, attending the ultimate, the mind has no interest in sensual caches. So he's kind of standing up against Morrow, saying, I'm not going to give in for nothing. And he's been tempted saying you could live a spiritual The old in the old system, just going attaining lots of merit, you can do lots of good you can do fire sacrifices and all this merit, and then you can get a good rebirth and it's all great. And the Buddha was not interested in that, in good reverse. He wasn't interested in merit. He was interested in somehow discovering liberation freedom, and he wasn't going to stop on anything short of that liberation. So it was a tremendous dedication. So again, maybe we can think of him as a very passionate man, very determined man. He describes itself as being persistent and standing up against Maher and says, No, I'm not going to stop for nothing. And then he goes on and says, sensual passions are your first army, the armies of Mara. Your second is called discontent. Your third is hunger and thirst. Your fourth is called craving. Fifth is sloth and torpor six is called tear. Your seventh is uncertain hypocrisy and stubbornness your eighth gains offerings fame and status wrongly gained, and whoever would praise self and disparage others. That Mara is your army. The Dark Ones commend commando force. a coward can't defeat it. But one having defeated it gains bliss. Do I carry a white flag of surrender? death in battle would be better for me than that I defeated survive. That's quite strong. I'm seeing the bannard force on all sides the troops of Mara, along with his in Morrow along with his mount. I go into battle. May they not budge me from my spot. That army of yours The world with its devices can't overcome. I will smash with wisdom as an unfired pot smashed with a stone, making my resolve mastered mindfulness well established. I will go about from kingdom to kingdom, training many disciples, they heat for resolute doing my bidding, despite your wishes will go where I've been gone. There is no grief. And then Mara says, For seven years I've dogged the Blessed One steps, but having gained an opening in the in the one self awakened and glorious. A crow circled a stone, the color of fat and said to itself, maybe I found something tender there. Maybe there's something delicious but not getting anything delicious from that stone. The crow went away. Like the crow attacking the rock. I wearing myself with the Buddha He was over. And then and then Mara overcome with sorrow. His loot fell from under his arm, then he

despondent, then he the despondent spirit right there disappeared. So this is supposed to be one of the most ancient descriptions of the struggle of Mara, and the night of his enlightenment, of the Buddha, the night of his enlightenment, with Mara, very strong language, very strong discussion about these forces. And the army Mars very interesting because you're not going to find these outside of yourself. sensual passion, how much suffering has been caused by people in the world because of sensual passion. Tremendous amount for all the wonderfulness of sensual desire. sensual passion has caused tremendous amount of suffering and knowledge, no shortage of human being beings who wish they hadn't listened to their central passion because it caused so much damage and harm. And the second is discontent. armies of martyrs so it supports Mara which supports these deadening forces, discontent. Boredom may be hunger and thirst, hunger and thirst is very interesting because it's physiological. Rather than psychological. You must be hungry and thirsty. And any parent knows that you have a little mark on your hand. If your child is hungry, it's awful or tired. And they called activated determining which I didn't know about until I had kids called the witching hour. And that's somewhere around four and five and it just finally gets food in them. And so a hunger and thirst is some of the things that support the forces of Mara. You know, we get caught up so easy to give up and give in. And the worst worst of us come out. Then craving sloth and torpor, tears, tear, hypocrisy and stubbornness, doubt, and then concerned with gain, offerings fame and status are all things that support Morrow and these forces. So this is a kind of strong language but the question for each of you is, Are there things in yourself forces in yourself that you are best not getting into? Do you notice? compulsion Do you notice desires, you know spheres you notice hates you notice directions that your mind goes that you'd actually rather not take behavior you do you'd rather not do. And what is your relationship to behavior? Do you have thoughts? If you have feelings if you go on impulses do you have that you'd rather not following and live by? Are you able to say no? Or do you give in, and then the end of the week, if you'll regret, I'm going to meditate. That's a common with meditators, right? I'm going to meditate. Okay, now I'm resolved. I'm going to get up now. I'm going to meditate every day from now on. This is it. Well, tomorrow, we'll start tomorrow. Yeah. Tomorrow comes in tomorrow. And what is it that goes on what's happening there? what's, what are the things that get in the way of that intention? Or the intention to be a little bit kinder, maybe some of you sometimes have to tendency to be a little bit hot headed, and would rather not snap at your friends. But you find yourself at once again snapping at someone. And something, you know, that's not you, that's what you identify with something inside of you, has kind of moved through you and got them to apprehend. So what is our relationship to those parts of ourselves, which, you know, we'd rather not live by now, what the Buddha does over and over again, when Mara visits is he uses his wisdom to conquer Mara. And the wisdom that primarily takes the form of seeing Mara saying, Mara, I see you. And when Mara seen, then Mara runs away. There's something very powerful in the act of seeing. And I think I'm very fond of this because seeing is not denying, and also seeing it's not exactly the same thing as fighting against. It's more like fighting with yourself. So that I'm not going to give into this. I see it I'm going to hold my own. I'm not going to go there. I'm not going to get in. So it's kind of like more struggle with yourself than just struggling against something else. Okay, I'm going to hold myself and hold my seat. Take my place. This is where I'm going to be like this verse. Like a fish out of water thrown on dry ground. This mind trashes about trying to escape Mars command. Sometimes it can be that way. Sometimes the

closer you get to being able to get out of the grip of Mara gripper these four forces are these currents, the more it kind of complains and argues and you know, it's really amazing. I've watched my mind sometimes it's amazing. You know, I should have been a lawyer. You know, the arguments and reasons and rationale and legalities of why, you know, I should do these things that my mind sometimes wants to do is just trashing about trying to escape. Greater in combat than a person who conquers greater in combat than a person who conquers 1000 times 1000 people is the person who conquers herself. That's a million people. Right? thousand times 1000 people. I mean, that's pretty good, right? My middle son. My son was the newest Halloween right so I went to his preschool this morning because they had all Halloween parade in school and all these kids were dressed up And my son doesn't watch any television so he doesn't know but one of the things so he really wanted to be a bunny rabbit. So my sister sort of a bunny rabbit costume and now pretty much all the other boys in the class. I don't know what you know, I don't know Star Wars I've no idea where it was but there were these, you know these you know is some kind of they were going to conquer the universe you know just the world's too small right? They were out there and if their lasers and these masks and it was quite you know something my vital signs and money around so you could talk you know better than conquering a million people is conquering yourself. My oldest son today he was a pirate. And we thought he should say thank you so people give him Trick or Treat but he's kept saying, pirates don't say thank you. Just in a discussion about the Eightfold Path. The verse says, This is the path for purifying one's vision. There is no other, follow it and you will and you will be wielder. Mara. So we engage in a path that bewilders Mara that confuses them or doesn't give them our chance. It is up to you to make strong effort. The Buddha's merely tell you how, following the path, those absorbed in meditation will be freed from Mara Bond's this I say to you good fortune to all assembled here. Dig out the root of craving as you would the fragrant root of the Burana grass. Don't let Mara destroy you again and again, as a torrential river breaks are read. So you find very strong language of this you know, battle between forces between Mara and Buddha, Mara and awakening the forces of deadness that put us in bondage in the forces that previous some people are very uncomfortable with that kind of strong dualistic language some people Just doesn't taste right in their mouth to hear it and relate to it. But somehow or other, we have to deal with these different forces within us, and how do we relate to them? And how do we work with them. And I don't think it's a very wise thing just to go along with whatever desires come up and whatever forces within us come up, bubble up. You might think that the Buddhist tradition points to a possibility of purifying oneself once and for all, so that once you get become a Buddha, once you become enlightened, then you're home free. And, and, you know, Mara will never visit that temptation will never rise, ego will never rise. Pride will never rise. Lust will never rise, hate will never rise. All the different forces of Mara and I'm not pulling lightly I don't know. However, if you go and look at these texts of the Buddha, then it's very interesting that Mara keeps visiting the Buddha after he's enlightened, many stories of burn Mara visiting Buddha, doctors enlightened and then really begs the question, why does Mara What's going on? Once the Buddhist fully enlightened? Why is Mars keep coming? And one interpretation of this is that Mars still is just like any other human being has these human tendencies as human forces that arise. But Mara is free, not from them here exactly. But from really picking them up from their influence. So desire arises, and the Buddha sees it as a desire. Maybe hate arises in the mind of the Buddha. The Buddha sees it and

says I see it and doesn't go anywhere. It stops right there. Something in the clarity of seeing We don't buy into these forces within us. There's something in in the Buddhist psyche, where there's no hooks. There's no attempt to grasp or fall into some of these things, human tendencies that bubble up. They bubble up, they're there, but they don't go anywhere. And that's the one definition of enlightenment is not the absence once and for all of greed, hate and delusion, though rather, that the mind not going to go there when they arise. There's a place of freedom. We rest there and that's freedom. And we notice that things arise, but we just don't go there. Well so i don't know if i frightened you are bored you are what? But there is this devil in Buddhism. What seems to have happened in history of Buddhism is as the centuries went along that the Buddhists forgot that Mara was simply convenient, Sims convenient, symbolic way of talking about these forces inside of ourselves and start seeing some some Buddhists seeing as more as being something really external being kind of a deity type person. But it seems that the Buddha, primarily we talked about Mara was really so it's all it's all a way of talking about what goes on inside and a way of talking about it so we don't get too identified with it. We don't see it as who we really are. And so I had one more point maybe that's tomorrow's doing for me to forget. Oh, that was the point is that so now maybe you want to dress up as Mara, you know, for Halloween You know, there's all these devils you could possibly devil, right? You can figure out you can dress up like Mara someday. The problem with that is that Mara in the Buddhist texts, doesn't have any particular shape. Mara could take any kind of shape. Mara can be the incredibly beautiful guy or the incredible beautiful gal or Mara can be a farmer in a text Mara can be a Brahmin Mark Mara can be a a musician. Mark can be a great general writing on big elephant charging into battle. Mara can take any shape and form that is useful in order to somehow trick you into going a little bit further down the current. So may you if you can't go up current, may you at least get onto dry ground. Thank you very much