Satan’s Christmas List

Tonight I want to share a story that I discovered a few years ago at Christmas time.

- It is an unusual tale but there are some lessons in it that we all would benefit from considering in our lives.

He snuck in when no one was watching through an opening that few realized was there.

- At first he was just a casual visitor of sorts.
- He was a down-on-his-luck, 21-year-old young man with nowhere to live, who could think of nowhere else to turn.
- He had been living with some friends in their duplex but, when they kicked him out, in desperation he snuck through a trap door into the attic.
- He soon discovered that the Attic offered access to the other house in the duplex.

I’m sure that, in the beginning he saw it as only a place to dwell for a few days.

- However, after a bit he became hungry and, realizing that no one was home downstairs he let himself into the condo below him.
- It started with just the pilfering of a few food items.
- After a day or so passed and he realized that he was able to remain undetected he got a little more aggressive and helped himself to a few items of clothing.
- For days he continued that way.
- Sleeping in the attic when the family was home and stealing food and clothing as well as blankets when they were away.
- For the most part he was completely unnoticed, although, in retrospect, the homeowner remembers hearing some odd noises but didn’t think much of it at the time.

After living in the attic undetected for a period of time the young man began to take things other than the food and clothes that he viewed as necessities.

- And, for a while, he got away with it.
- The family knew things were missing and suspected that, perhaps someone had a duplicate set of keys to their house.
- However, on Christmas day, he overstepped himself.
- When the family discovered that cash, a laptop computer and an iPod were missing they called the police.
- The next day they discovered footprints in the closet where the attic access was and called the police again.
- This time the police brought a dog and before long Stanley Carter was flushed out of his hiding place.
- Only then did the reality of what had been going on begin to sink in.
- When he came down from the attic, family members recognized their own clothes and even their sneakers.
- As police searched the attic they found the many missing items but they also
found that the meticulous Carter had kept track of everything he stole. On a piece of paper labeled as Stanley’s Christmas List, they found a list of all the items he had stolen and given to himself for Christmas!

In John 10:10, Jesus described Satan as a thief that comes to steal, kill and destroy.

- I feel compelled to warn you tonight that if we aren’t careful we will allow an uninvited guest to take up residence in our lives.
  - I want you to know that there is a thief that can worm his way into your life unnoticed.
- He slips in through an opening created by your carnal nature and he would like to establish his residence in your life.
  - At first he’s just a minor nuisance.
  - At first he just pilfers the small things.
- It’s a slow process.
  - He works craftily and carefully.
  - He will start in on your devotion and dedication.
- He’ll try to rob you of your prayer time and steal from you daily bible study.
  - You see he thrives on the flesh and, in order for him to survive, he has to replace spiritual things with carnal things.

If there was no food available then the Christmas bandit would have been forced to move on before his theft became a serious problem.

- But, the availability of the things that would sustain him
  - were all it took to keep him hanging around until he moved on to bigger things.
- It’s much the same way with the thief in your life.
  - He thrives off of the carnal appetites of the flesh
    - and is starved by the things that nourish the spiritual man.
- This is always the first evidence of his presence in your life,
  - the spiritual pursuits begin to be choked out by carnal desires.
  - Daily devotions of prayer and bible reading
    - are displaced a busy schedule or an abundance of entertainment.

In order to remove the thief from your life, you must first discover that he is there.

- One way to tell that your life has become the host of a parasite that desires to steal from you and then kill and destroy you
  - is when your spirit becomes starved for the things of God
  - while the appetites of your flesh are constantly fed.
- If, when you take a hard look at your life, you discover that carnal desires have supplanted spiritual appetites
  - then you must recognize that there is a thief in your life.
    - At this point he’s easy to get rid of.
    - You simply starve him out.
- The answer to this satanic invasion is simply to nourish the things of the spirit.
Gorge yourself on the word of God.
Listen to good preaching every chance you get
and spend regular time in prayer!

But mark my words; if you don’t run him off, he will begin to take his liberty in your life.

- After he establishes his presence and begins to get a little boldness about him,
  - he tiptoes through your life and begins to fill out his Christmas List of all the things he’s going to steal from you.

Let me tell you the things on Satan’s Christmas List:

At the very top of his list you’ll find Joy.
- Joy is always the first casualty of a satanic invasion.
  - He does his best work once the light of joy is dimmed in a life.
    - When there’s no joy, he blinds the eyes of faith.
    - When there’s no joy he can turn sunrises into sunsets.
- It’s the first big ticket item he’ll go after.
  - With the care and craft born of centuries of experience
    - this master thief will begin to cultivate feelings of bitterness and distress in your life.
  - Seductively he will whisper into your spirit.
    - He’ll tell you that you are all alone.
    - He’ll tell you that no one cares.
    - He’ll tell you that you don’t really matter.
    - He’ll find the negative in every event in your life.
  - He’s a master at looking at the other side of the coin,
    - at questioning motives and pointing out faults.
- Yes, my friend, joy is the first major casualty in your life after this intruder establishes his foothold in your heart.
  - When you can’t seem to find any joy in your Christian walk its time to start looking for an intruder in your life.
    - The thief has snuck in.
- Don’t be foolish like the family in Pennsylvania that realized something wasn’t right but merely brushed it off and went on with their lives,
  - because the thief is just getting started.

Where there’s no joy, there’s no praise and Satan’s second target is your worship.
- By this point he’s getting pretty good at manipulating you
  - and you’re getting pretty comfortable with him taking up residence in your life.
- He’ll give you every reason in the world not to worship.
  - You’ll quickly discover how convenient it is to be too tired, too sick, or too depressed to go to church.
  - He’ll point out the inconvenience of going to church and worshipping God
• and remind you of the comfort of just staying at home.
  o By hook or crook, he’ll do whatever it takes to turn off the fountain of
    worship in your life
  ▪ because he despises nothing more than worship that is
directed at God instead of him.
  o He realizes that when your worship is gone
  ▪ there’s little else that can stop him from setting up full
    residence in your life.

There are other things on Satan’s Christmas list, precious things that matter more to
you than you even realize.
• The bolder he gets the bigger his pursuits become.
  o He’ll steal your faith, trading it for a jaded cynicism.
  o He’ll rob you of God’s call and purpose for your life.
  o He’ll take away your dreams and remove all hope from your heart.
• All that is valuable,
  o all that is precious,
  o everything that matters in your life becomes an item on his greedy
    wish list
  o and, since you’ve tolerated him this long,
    ▪ he’ll feel emboldened to take whatever he wants!

The tragedy of the whole story is that, unlike the wayward young man in our story,
• **Satan is not satisfied just to be a thief.**
  o This was the message that Jesus sought to convey in John 10:10.
    ▪ He won’t stop with just robbing you blind,
      • he wants to kill and destroy you as well.
  • He doesn’t just want to take from you until there’s nothing left.
    o He isn’t just interested in leaving you broken and hopeless,
      ▪ an empty shadow of what you once were.
    o His chief desire is to crush you,
      ▪ destroy you,
      ▪ then kill you.
• He wants more than just the good things in your life,
  o he wants your soul!
• The enemy of your soul seeks to gain access to your life,
  o not just to harm you but, rather, to kill you.
• He won’t ever be satisfied with just stealing your joy
  o or stripping you of your worship.
• His appetite won’t be satisfied by taking your hopes and dreams
  o or by stealing your faith.
• His desire is to drag your soul to hell.
  o He wants to destroy you!

**Close**
The good news tonight is that he doesn’t have to be a permanent houseguest.

- Even after his infiltration of your life has become more advanced,
  - the means of his removal is still the same.
- You simply have to recognize that he is there and starve him from your life.
  - It starts with repentance and soul searching.
  - It continues with worship and rededication
  - and the end result is restoration and reconciliation
    - as God walks through the hidden chamber of your heart
    - and returns to you all the things that were rightfully yours.

Are you tired of the thief in your heart?

- He can only stay as long as you tolerate his presence.
  - When you get fed up and turn to the Lord for help,
    - the thief has no choice but to be bound and removed from your life.
- Tonight I want to encourage you to take stock of your life.
  - Take inventory of the precious things in your life.
    - How’s your personal devotion?
    - How’s your prayer reading and bible study?
    - Are you missing your joy?
    - Has your worship been stolen?
- These are all symptoms of a bigger problem.
  - Tonight you can remove the intruder from your life.
    - It starts by renewing your personal dedication.
    - It starts by building again the alters in your life.
- As we celebrate Christmas and look forward to a new year, why don’t you purpose in your heart to get closer to God than you’ve ever been before?
  - To fill your heart with so much of Jesus and His word that there isn’t any room left for that old thief in your life!