

Restoring Stolen Property

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon highlights God's power to restore what has been stolen from us, both in our lives and spiritually.

Duration: 26:01

Topics: "Restitution"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about encountering a blind beggar in Madrid, Spain. As they approach the beggar, he suddenly starts banging and yelling, causing money to drop. The preacher's friend gets his leg tugged by someone while the commotion is happening. The preacher then relates this story to the concept of Satan stealing from people without them even realizing it. He emphasizes the need to be aware of the enemy's tactics and to trust in God's guidance, using the example of David's victory over the Amalekites in the Bible.

Transcript

There's a couple of messages that I felt the Lord has given me over the years that sometime he directs me to because there's someone in the audience that he loves so much, who so needs to hear it, that he takes away what I was planning to do and is teaching me to trust him. So I wanna speak briefly, but I wanna speak about something, I don't care if you're not a Christian or if you are a Christian, I don't care how long you've been serving the Lord, this is something which I trust the Holy Spirit will apply to our hearts. David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives.

Nothing was missing, young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else that they had taken. David brought everything back. That's at the end of a story that takes up a couple chapters at the end of 1 Samuel.

And it's about David, but he's not the king yet. David, as you know, is one of the outstanding figures in the Old Testament. He's so outstanding and so special that Jesus is called not the son of Moses or the son of Elijah or the son of Abraham, although he was a descendant of Abraham, but he is called Jesus, son of David.

David was the king that God chose to put on the throne. The people had chosen Saul who preceded him, but Saul went the way of all flesh. And it was for David to get the kingdom to where God wanted it to be.

As you know, David started as a shepherd boy. God made him famous in Israel because he slew the Philistine champion, Goliath, and he was the toast of the town. Unfortunately, Saul, who should have appreciated him, got jealous of him.

There is something in all of us that's one of the lower, nastier human emotions called envy or jealousy. We resent when God blesses someone and other people notice it and praise them. It's part of our own pride and insecurity.

The Bible says wrath is terrible and anger is horrible, but nobody can stand before envy or jealousy. When someone's jealous of you, I don't care what you do for them. They're gonna dislike you and be jealous of you.

Saul got very jealous of David because somebody, in a moment of rapture, wrote this song, Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands. That was a big song back then. I think the choir sang.

Some of the choirs recorded it back then. Saul didn't like it. He said, I only slew thousands.

He slew tens of thousands. So out of nowhere, he flipped. You know, a double-minded person's unstable in all their ways and when jealousy gets in you, who knows what you'll try to do.

So he tried to kill David through a spirit of him, while of all things, David was singing to him. David was this strange person. He was a warrior, but a musician.

Most musicians don't wanna fight and most fighters can't sing a song, but David could do both. And Saul then caused David to go on the run. He had to leave his parents.

He had to leave his wife. And he went on the run and he hid out in caves and mountain fortresses and deserts. That's where he wrote a good number of the Psalms.

A lot of the Psalms that we read in the Psalter where he says, God, where are you? God, come quickly. God, help me. My enemies are increasing.

They're like mad dogs that snap at me. A lot of these were written, as best we know, during some of this precarious time David spent on the run. Well, David ended up here, there and everywhere because he has at sometimes the whole army of Israel chasing him.

Who does he have with him? Well, men keep coming to him and their wives and families who are disenchanted with King Saul and they're being persecuted. So they go identify with David, even though David is living on the run and doesn't have many creature comforts. And they side with David and there's about 120 of them.

They're like a little militia. David ends up at one time living with the Philistines who were the enemies of Israel. But he's so on the run, the King of the Philistines takes him in.

And at the end of 1 Samuel, David's living with the Philistines. He lives in a town called Ziklag with his own men. That's where they are.

And they're just there. Now the incredible happens. The Philistines declare war on Israel and the Philistines are now gonna fight against Israel.

So David is with the Philistines living with them, but he's an Israelite. What to do? He goes to the King who's lined up, King Achish who lines up at a place called Aphek. And he says to King, King, I know you're going to battle.

Me and my 120 men, we are down with you. We are ready to roll. And the King says, yeah, you've been with me over a year.

You've been acting like an angel. And I'm happy to have a fighter like you. But the generals who work with the King, they go, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, timeout.

We can't go to battle with David on our side. He says, why not? You've observed him for a year. What has he ever done wrong? They went, wait, wait, wait, wait.

This is David, D-A-V-I-D. This is David as in David and Goliath that he slew his tens of thousands. And some of those folks were us.

So King Achish, get a grip. We can't go to war with David on our side. In the middle of the battle, he'll turn against us.

And then what are we going to do? So the King says to David, you got to go back to Ziklag, your town. He goes, why? I'm ready to fight. They go, no, no, they won't fight with you.

My generals will not fight. They will not move forward with you. David frustrated, hurt, turns around with his men and they go back.

It's a long trip. And whatever's going to happen between Philistines and Israel, it's not going to be part of David's agenda. As David is going back with his men to Ziklag, way in the distance, they see some smoke.

That makes them quick in their pace. Smoke. Now they get closer, they see a lot of smoke.

Now they start to trot because they've left behind their wives, their children, sons, daughters, and all their livestock and all their possessions. And when they finally get to Ziklag, David and his men, they find out it's been burned to the ground and there's nobody home. What David doesn't know is that the Amalekites, one of the Canaanite peoples who were always in the Bible the enemy of God's people, the Amalekites have been raiding Philistine town, Israel towns, they've been just raiding, ripping people off, stealing, kidnapping, and they've done it to Ziklag.

David doesn't know that. But listen, that was a rough and tough day back then. You think it's bad now? You think some of the stories we hear now are gruesome? Back in that day, if you had a 14-year-old daughter and she was no longer there, what would you naturally think? Or your wife or your son.

Nobody took them to have Bible studies. Something bad is happening out there. Everything's gone, babies, infants, everything, gone.

David's men are tough warriors, but even they can't take it. And the Bible tells us they start to break down and weep and cry because they've lost everything. Here they were out ready to fight because David said, go with me.

And now they come back and everything's gone. You know, when your wife and your children have been taken from you and you don't know where they are, that is one of the ultimate worst feelings you can have

of fear, anxiety. Well, they cry, they vent, even though they're tough guys, and now they turn on David.

Because a lot of times when people are sad and have been broken emotionally or have like a nervous breakdown, they have to turn on somebody to vent. And if you happen to be nearby, it could be you. So they turn on David and they talk about stoning him.

Like, what were we doing out there? Why weren't we watching our families? And the Bible says in a poignant verse, but David found strength in the Lord, his God. You know, when everything is against you, you gotta get alone with God. How many say amen? Because only God can give you strength to know what to do, how to bear it, peace that will carry you through.

Well, David gets to his spiritual senses and he calls for the priest who he travels with. Because in those days, when you sought God's will, you did it through the high priest who wore a certain garment. I'm not gonna go into it, but it's a teaching from the Old Testament.

You consulted the priest. David goes to the priest and he says, I wanna ask God two questions. Should I go after whoever did this? And number two, if I go after them, will I find them? And God answers back through the priest and says, go, vamonos, go.

And you will, I'll help you to find them. So David, led by God, gathers his 120 men and says, men, all is not lost, let's go, God's gonna help us. And they go riding off in a way that God directed them.

While they're riding, they see somebody lying in the sand, half dead. And they go up to him and he's barely living, so they give him some figs and raisins, the Bible tells us. And they say, who are you? And he says, listen, I'm an Egyptian and I'm a servant of the Amalekites, but I got sick, so they dumped me here to die.

What have you been doing with the Amalekites? Oh, we've been raiding the different towns and we've been going here, there. In fact, we just hit zig lag and we burned it to the ground and robbed everything there. And David said, did you? He said, swear to me that you'll lead me to where those people are who did this, the Amalekites.

And the servant says to him, I will, but the servant is, que listo, he's smart. He goes, I'll do it, but swear to me, you won't take my life. And David says, I give you my word.

They go riding off and the guy is leading them. And the guy takes them here, there, through the desert, wilderness. They come to the top of a little cliff and there's a valley below.

And you won't believe this, in the valley are all the Amalekites having a party. Got some vodka, they got a lot of stuff down there. And they're high-fiving, they're carousing.

And guess who's there? All the kids, all the wives, all the cattle, everything is there. And the Bible tells us that at about dusk, David started down the hill. And for the next 24 hours, he and his men fought against the Amalekites and the Bible tells us they captured every wife, every child, all the cattle, all their possessions.

And on top of that, they ripped off the Amalekites for the property they had. You know, it's like God says in the Bible, we are more than conquerors. We not only conquer, we're more than conquerors.

And that was the day, ladies and gentlemen, as I get ready to close, that David found out for the first time that God recovers stolen property. Stolen property is a thing New Yorkers know about because you're not a real true New Yorker unless you've been robbed. How many say amen? Years ago, I took a survey and said, how many have been robbed here, broken into, pickpocketed, something stolen, car, whatever? And everybody, just about everybody robbed their hand because if you live here long enough, you get robbed.

Am I right or wrong here? Back when we were in the other building, I had a car parked at a certain spot, came out to the car, front window in the front, the very front had been broken into and my airbag had been stolen. Back then, crack addicts especially were taking airbags, taking it to a chop shop and turning it to quick money, certainly enough money to get their next supply of crack. And they end up in a crack house for hours.

So airbags, they didn't steal the car, didn't steal, didn't take the wheels, just the airbag. I didn't know what to do. Should I report it? My rates go up.

Should I not report it? Just fix it myself. I forgot now which I did. As God is my witness, seven months later, parked in the same spot, window broken, I'm minus another airbag.

And I know it was the same person. I could tell by the way they got in. We were developing a personal relationship through this whole thing.

Airbag kind of brought us together. I was thinking of leaving cookies and a letter and saying, why don't we just meet? We could get together, it'd be cheaper for me. But that's New York.

Now listen to me as I close. Jesus said in John 10, 10, the thief, whenever a young person listen, whether you believe in God or not, the thief, Jesus said, who never lies, the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. But I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly.

You know, real life, not existence, not partying and clubbing and drugs and sex and vacations, because that can only satisfy on the human level, but your soul, peace, meaning, joy, purpose, and then you're scared to death of death. Because now if Jesus, unless he's a liar and bogus, he says we're all gonna have to stand before God one day. So the thief, Satan, comes only to steal, kill, and destroy.

But I've come that you might have real life, not biological life, eternal life. He that believes in me, though he were dead, Jesus said, he'll live forever in heaven with perfect joy and peace. So the Bible says that this thief comes before, kill, and destroy, what does he do? He steals.

Since Jesus was talking about Satan, I just wanna leave this with you. What in the world do you think Satan would like to steal? He's a thief, we know that. He's not interested, by the way, do you think money? He has no need for money.

Airbag or a car, he gets around fine without your car. He doesn't even need your MetroCard, he can get around. Your savings, not interested.

How about your apartment, you know that one? Or how about the furniture you just paid for? How about that big widescreen TV? You can keep it, he's not interested. Well, Jesus said the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. Now, mind you, when Satan steals, he doesn't advertise it.

In fact, some of you right here, right now, could be ripped off of the most valuable things you have in life, and you don't even know it. Now, I was once in Madrid, Spain, and my friend and I, a minister who was translating for me, he got taken by something. It was very incredibly smart in an evil way.

There's a blind guy sitting, I think he's blind, sitting, and he's got a cane, and he's sitting there, and there's some people around him, and we're walking down, and he's got a little basket begging for money, and as we're approaching, suddenly he's banging, and he says something, and then we hear some money dropping, and the next thing we know, my friend, someone's tugging at his leg, at his pants leg, tugging like this, right? Tugging, and I'm next to him, this guy's tugging, the money's dropping, this guy's yelling, and he's tugging, and then he lets go, and he says, get out of here, in Spanish, he says, let me go, let me go. I just knew when it happened, I got a bad feeling, I said, Dan, check your back pocket, and sure enough, his wallet was gone. By distraction, they lifted his wallet right out.

All his money, his credit cards, license, everything, gone. My friend got upset, and he picked the guy up who had been pulling his leg, and he said in Spanish, donde esta mi dinero? He lifted him off of the ground, which didn't seem like a Christian thing to do when I was watching it. He was lifting him right off his feet, by here, and lifting him up, but it was too late.

Other people had run away. Perfect distraction, and then steal. That's what Satan does.

When he steals something valuable from you, he doesn't like advertise, I'm coming next week, have the house ready, because I wanna steal something. No thief does that, so let's talk. What do you think he would like to steal? How about this? Well, how about your soul? How about your soul? He's gonna lie to you and say, if you go to church and try to live a good life, you're gonna go to heaven one day.

That's a lie. He's gonna steal your soul. You have to be born again.

You have to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Well, I'm not interested in that. You will be when you die.

When you face God, you will be very interested, and I'm telling you today, so nobody's blood is on my hands. Nobody who's listening to me here today will be able to say to God, I never heard. I never knew what the truth was.

I'm telling you, you must be born again. You gotta confess your sin and come to Jesus and say, Jesus, forgive me like I've had to, because I can't go to heaven on my track record. It's bad.

I got a bad track record. But thank God for my Savior, Jesus. How many say amen? Thank God that my sins have been washed away.

But how about that? How about more than this? How about if you're young, like one of you here, one of you young adults here, how about God's plan and calling for your life? Ah, now that's something Satan would want. You can have your money, you can have your stuff, but to rob that from you so that you go on a dead end and do nothing with your life? How about some of you over here? He's called you to do mission trips. He's called you to be in the choir or the prayer band.

He's called you to work with children. You remember back then when you had those desires? Oh, that's another thing he steals is your first love. Keep your money, keep your clothes, keep all this nice jewelry.

He could care less. What in the world is he interested in that? But if you waste your life doing nothing but living for the things of time and materialism, ah, now if he can steal that. Just think of the potential that's lost by Satan stealing from people the calling God has on their life.

You know, there's a man sitting here today, and he and his family were called to New York to work in a Russian area of the city, and he's got a bunch of kids, six or seven. He's wheelchair-bound, and his wife is battling cancer, and she's pregnant. I've been impressed by this.

He's not gonna let Satan rob his calling. He's gonna fight. No, no, no, you're not gonna rob what God called me to do.

Yeah, there's difficulties, but the thief comes only to steal. Or your devotional life, or your prayer life. How about, you don't think this stuff evaporates like it goes up into the atmosphere.

So it's, you're being ripped off. Remember when you used to read the Bible a lot? Whatever happened to that? Come on, don't say you're mature now, and you're older, and you have a busy life. You've been ripped off.

You have to be humble enough to face that, because the thief comes only to steal. Or prayer, or being in the prayer meeting, or being involved. I've seen that happen with my own relatives.

They used to drag me to church when I didn't wanna go. I'd see them with their hands up in the air, and tears coming down their eyes, and they're worshiping Jesus. And I watch as time went on.

Most of them are gone, and passed away, my aunts and uncles. But at the end, they weren't even going to church. Not even going to church.

Now, how do you do that? How do you go, come on, Jimmy, come to church. Jesus is the most important thing. And then how do you get 25 years later, God who? Jesus who? Just, that's the battle we're in.

The thief comes only to steal. Even if you've dedicated something to God, he'll still try to steal it. I dedicated my daughter, first child, when she was born.

When we handed her to the minister, for those of you who understand 1 Corinthians 12, and 1 Corinthians 14, there was a prophecy spoken over her life. And she was this little. She was a model child.

Lived in church, listened to her mother, doing practices with a choir with nine people, 15 people. Saw her mom and dad struggling in a rundown building with less than 30 people coming to church, or 20, or whatever. But then when she got to be 16, 17, something started to happen.

Big wall. Not only a wall between her and God, a wall between her and us. And the next thing you know, we are in a two and a half year nightmare.

Nightmare. I'm talking about a tunnel with no light. Because the more we talked and prayed, the worse she got.

Harder than nails. She bonded with some guy who was, she met in the church. Because you know, the doors open to everyone.

Anybody can walk in here. Now she's out of control. Look at me, everyone.

I tried money. I'm not a fool. I tried money.

I tried screaming. I tried crying. I tried every kind of manipulation.

Nothing. Worse. Then she has a baby.

And I'm trying to hold it together, and my wife has female surgery. And she's not doing good. The thief comes to steal.

I got to the point where I felt God impressed me not to even talk to her anymore. Because the more I talked, the worse she got. You know, sometimes you gotta just stop talking and just praying.

So I prayed. How did I learn about prayer? And on a Tuesday night prayer meeting, I hadn't seen her in five, six months, nor the baby. We broke through.

God woke her up that very night. She was here in Brooklyn staying with someone who we knew. God gave her a dream.

God visited her. Shook her up. Showed her how much he loved her.

And the next morning, my wife broke into the bathroom while I was shaving and said, Chrissy's here, but you better go. And there she was on the kitchen floor, crying on her knees, hands. I came near, she tugged at my pants, lifted herself up.

Carol had the baby. And said, Daddy, I've sinned against God, against you, Mommy, myself. Who'd you have praying for me? Last night, tell me who was praying.

I said, well, God interrupted the prayer meeting and we stopped everything just to pray for you. Then she told me what he did. He rescued her.

You know why? He recovers stolen property. Come on, can we say amen to that? Every eye closed. If God's talked to you and put faith in your heart to see stolen property recovered, get up out of your seat and come here to the front.

Two of you, 200 of you, doesn't matter, just come. Something in your own life. Some calling, first love, passion for Christ, hunger for the word, a daughter, a son.

Come from the balcony, I'll wait for you. Jesus, give us back our stolen property, the calling of God, first love for Christ, hunger for spiritual things. Like we used to have.

Sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, grandsons, granddaughters. You recovered stolen property for David, we ask you, not in the name of David, we ask you in the name of Jesus, your own son. Send out angels right now, send them out.

Spirit of God, begin to work. Send dreams like you did for Chrissy. Begin a deep work, Holy Spirit, to recover every calling, every bit of stolen property that Satan has absconded with.

Satan, we come against you. In the name of Jesus, we come against you. You will not hinder the people of God from being everything Jesus wants us to be.

Let there be a marked change beginning right now, God, in our hearts and lives. We are now expecting to get phone calls. We're expecting to hear news of things that you've done, Lord, in our family, extended family.

Because with you, nothing is impossible. We thank you for your word today. Thank you for helping me preach something I wasn't prepared to preach.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. Can we all just open our mouths and say thank you to God and say praise God and hallelujah. Now bless us and make us a blessing and grant us your peace, for we pray it in Jesus' name.

Let's give God one final hand clap of praise, come on. Turn around and hug somebody, say hello. Come on, everybody, greet somebody.

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