Sermon 4: Information =? Property

4.0 Main Point

Stealing information is still stealing!

Lots of recent examples of people breaking into to other people's computers. Gets media attention every few years, but going on all the time.

Feds run a Center for Computer Security. Last year,1000 separate internet attacks, and like most crime, most don't get reported.

4.1 Reactions

Funny

Puberty -- they'll grow out of it

Brilliance -- should be rewarded

Just looking -- so what if you look, I didn't destroy any data

Blame the victim -- should have been more careful

Information = property. Takes money to create, privacy has a value, and you don't want other people to steal your privacy.

4.2 Analogies

Suppose you leave your window to your apartment open, someone breaks in, does that make it ok?

Suppose you lock your window, and someone breaks the glass to get in?

What if they didn't take anything, but just looked around? Does that make it ok?

What if someone takes your car on a joyride during class?

What if they return it back to the same place?
What if they fill it with gas?
Is it ok for someone to break into a bank vault, if they only take a $.01?

4.3 Information is valuable

Corporations, government collect all sorts of information about you, then sell it! Where do you think junk mail comes from? How do they know about you? Usually, because they bought the information -- for example, most states sell the list of all the drivers, with addresses, in the state.

A couple recent examples: Lotus tried to distribute database of information on all Americans, on CDROM. Big outcry -- what if it's wrong? No chance to correct it. But even if it's right, does Lotus have the right to sell your personal information?

Another example: Blockbuster keeps information about every movie you rent. They were going to sell this! Another big outcry, but this kind of thing going on all the time.

4.4 Solutions

1. Make systems more secure

2. Change societal attitudes.
3. Establish laws, against individuals invading your privacy, but also corporations and the government.