

# Down Home: Sundays, oxen and a peppercorn cannon

August 29, 2014

Sometimes, the most carefully devised plans blow up like a peppercorn cannon.

At least that's what happened the other Sunday afternoon.

Maybe I'm clumsy. Or maybe God was trying to tell me something.

Despite my recently successful efforts to keep the Sabbath and a mid-summer [editorial about Sabbath-keeping](#), I declared this particular Sunday an ox-in-the-well Sabbath.

You remember what I'm talking about: One Sabbath, Jesus visited a Pharisee's house and met a sick man. Knowing the religious leaders were looking to trap him for breaking the commandment about keeping the Sabbath, Jesus asked: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" When they refused to answer, he healed the man and then asked: "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" (Luke 14:1-6)

## Church chores

That Gospel passage played on my mind when Joanna and I arrived home after dinner-on-the-grounds followed by church conference. I wasn't really tempted to do work-work, but since I'd been saying "yes" at church lately, a few church-work chores had piled up. They seem practically impossible to complete during the week. So, I figured the Lord wouldn't mind if I declared them oxen and settled down with my laptop to pull them out of a figurative well before we headed off to a Sunday school-planning meeting

over dinner.

But first, Jo and I arrived home to a messy house. We'd just spent three days keeping our 3 1/2-year-old grandson, Ezra. Toys littered the den and patio. His outgrown babybed mattress lay in our bedroom floor, where he slept the previous nights. Dishes cluttered countertop and sink.

While Jo got busy with her tasks, I gathered the toys and tossed them in the middle-bedroom closet. Next, I stripped Ezra's mattress and dumped it back in the babybed. Then I took on the kitchen.

When Ezra visits our house, we wash all his milk-, water- and juice-cup parts in a small closable plastic container on the top tray of the dishwasher. When I saw the empty container, I thought, "Well, we don't need that until the next visit." And I placed it on the top shelf of the cabinet, above the plates and bowls.

### **'What's that noise?'**

Just as I shoved the container into what I thought was its slot, I heard a thud on the next cabinet door and apparently wondered, "What's that noise?"

Instinctively, I reached over and opened the other door. A nanosecond later, I heard a huge "bam!"

Looking down, I discovered the top half of a glass jar and black peppercorns scattered all across the countertop.

Of course, they didn't all stay on the countertop. A chunk of the bottom of the jar and scores of peppercorns lay on the open door of the dishwasher. Then I looked to my left and glimpsed peppercorns and shards of glass strewn across the kitchen floor.

Jo heard my commotion and headed toward the kitchen. "Be on the lookout

for glass," she warned. "Everywhere."

She was right, as usual. Circling back through the living room, and cutting across the patio, she found peppercorns and tiny bits of glass in the den, at least 30 feet away from the jagged remains of the peppercorn jar.

### **A change of agenda**

Well, that changed my Sunday afternoon agenda. I moved all the chairs into the den and proceeded to vacuum and then mop the entire kitchen floor as well as parts of the dining room and den. Jo followed me with the dust mop, just to be sure. And only then did we feel safe to walk barefoot across the room.

As I cleaned, I couldn't help but laugh at God's humor.

I felt as if the Lord responded to my Sabbath declaration: "You call ox-in-the-well Sabbath? I'll show you ox-in-the-well. How about I just shoot off a peppercorn-and-glass cannon in your kitchen?"

Well, that got my attention, all right. And by the time I cleaned up the kitchen, I didn't have time to finish pulling my church-work ox out of the Sunday afternoon well.

Next Sunday afternoon, I think I'll rest.