



BUILD YOUR HOUSE UPON A ROCK

We signed a big contract for major foundation repair. We waited for the Ram Jack Company to appear. The first truck to arrive unloaded a little green building. We didn't need another bathroom! They told me it came with the job. I said that I would rather have a blue one.

They ignored me and began driving 25 or so "piers" around the perimeter and through the inside concrete slab floor of our house. Some went down 60 feet! Lots of blue clay they said.

It cost a lot. My donation to the economy. Another way to raise the employment rate. A reduction in funds set aside for heirs. So be it.

GIVE ME LAND, LOTS OF LAND

My readers are scattered from Alaska to Florida, from Vermont to the South Pole, from Qatar to Australia. Why would they know about the little stand-off that's going on in Oregon, or care?

(For details Google "Malheur National Wildlife Refuge")

This is a minor blip in the history of land disputes. They are everywhere. They are emotional. Every town, city, county and state has them going on repeatedly. Millions around the world are refugees because of land possession issues.

Some land problems are in the Bible, like the mythical Garden of Eden. You may remember that Adam and Eve were evicted from the garden. Some squabble over fruit and trees if I remember.

Genesis isn't four chapters old before Cain murdered Abel because God took the side of a rancher over a settled farmer.

People implicate God in their disputes.

Ammon Bundy, leader of the occupiers in Oregon, said that God told him to go to Oregon to take land from the government and give it to ranchers.

When people claim to have orders from God, the first response should be "Oh, really?"

Sort of like when God told Abraham to take land occupied by the Canaanites and give to his own people.

Or, like Brigham Young, claiming a chunk of the western United States into Idaho, Oregon, Utah, Nevada, California and south to the Mexican border, renaming it Deseret. God said he could.

My readers in St. George, Utah, for instance, will tell you that some Mormons still believe that the United States still does not have higher authority than the Mormon Church.

It's not hard to arouse westerners against fences and regulations and taxes. "*Give me land, lots of land, don't fence me in.*" It's almost a spiritual thing. "*This land is your land, this land is my land...*" The emphasis tends to fall on "me" and "my." We hardly think to remember that the continent was well-occupied before Europeans arrived.

Interestingly, out here where the "none's" and "done's" constitute the largest religious groupings (except maybe for the Mormons) folks are surprisingly religious and patriotic as well. It's the super-religious and super-patriots that trouble us.

What if the powers and principalities do not do justice and love mercy and walk humbly either? It is right to stand up to them sometimes, even as Jesus did. It can be difficult and costly to do so as it was for Jesus and Martin Luther King.

We'll see how it all turns out. One thing for sure, conflicts involving property and land will never end.

BOOK CORNER

I just happened to be reading a book by Timothy Egan, "*Lasso the Wind*," when all this began. I recommend it for those who love the American west. Read Chapter 7, "*The Empire of Clean*," if nothing else.

If you love the American west you will love Egan's free-wheeling tour through its 11 states. If you have traveled this region he will remind you of familiar places, help discover history and other things you may have missed. You will see why passions are stirred and how the present dispute in Harney County, Oregon fits right in. As the book cover says, "*He evokes a lovely and troubled country where land is religion and the holy war between preservers and possessors never ends.*"

See what you think. There's lots of land out here, but it might not be as empty as it appears.

— Art Morgan, January 21, 2016