

DIVINE MATH

(John 2: 1-11)

Intro: When my son Joel was a toddler.
-He was always pretty good at math.
#He wouldn't claim that today.
*But he was good at math.
-You couldn't ask him:
#"What is $8 \div 4$?"
*He couldn't tell you.
-But if you said to him:
#"If I have:"
*8 cookies.
*4 children.
+To share them equally.
#"How many cookies will each child get?"
-He would immediately answer:
#"Two."

But Joel's math.
-And our math.
#Is "zero sum" math.
-If I have 8 cookies.
#And I give 8 cookies away.
*2 to you.
*2 to you.
*2 to you.
*2 to you.
-How many cookies do I have left?
#Zero.
*We operate with "zero sum" math.

God's math is different.
-God can give away an infinite number of anything.
#Blessings.
#Spiritual gifts.
#Forgiveness.
-How much is left?
#God only knows!
#There's always more.
*God's grace never gets to zero.

I. Wedding At Cana Is A Contrast Between "Zero Sum" Math And God's Math.

A. Wedding Reception Ran Out of Wine.

1. Weddings were different in Jesus' day.

a. Weddings were not a one day affair.

-Wedding receptions could last for a week or more.

#People didn't usually:

*Come.

*Stay.

+For the whole week.

#Some people would come.

*Drink a toast.

+Or two.

*Maybe have a bite to eat.

*They'd go home.

#Next day other people would come.

*Drink a toast.

+Or two.

*Maybe have a bite to eat.

*They'd go home.

b. Wedding receptions were not paid for only by the parents of the bride.

-Friends would send a bottle of wine.

#Kind of like an advance wedding gift.

#To be shared at the reception.

-To run out of wine was a great:

#Embarrassment.

#Source of shame.

-It was a sign.

#Bridal families didn't have many friends.

#Friends were not very generous.

#Host was not very hospitable.

2. At the wedding in Cana.

a. Wine gave out.

b. That's the way it is in the human economy.

-Bottles get emptied.

-Kegs run dry.

- B. Then Jesus Got Involved.
1. At the request of his mother.
 - a. Even though Jesus' hour had not yet come.
 - Hour that would reveal Jesus' ultimate glory.
 - #That would come:
 - *On the cross.
 - *On the third day.
 - b. Jesus introduced the new math.
 2. There were 6 stone jars there.
 - a. Used for the Jewish rites of purification.
 - They were:
 - #Empty.
 - #Dry.
 - #Spiritually bankrupt.
 - That's the way it is in the old economy.
 - b. Jesus had them filled with water.
 - 20-30 gallons each.
 - #120-180 gallons in all.
 - c. Water was turned into wine.
 - In God's economy.
 - #There was enough.
 - #There was more than enough.
 - #There was an abundance.
 - Not only was there an abundance.
 - #It was the best.
 3. This was the first of Jesus' signs.
 - a. John's term for miracle.
 - Called a sign.
 - #Because it points beyond itself.
 - *To the one who manifests:
 - +Presence.
 - +Power.
 - =Of God.
 - b. Jesus revealed his glory.
 - c. His disciples believed in him.
 - That's the purpose of the signs.
 - #Including:
 - *Jesus' death on the cross.
 - *His resurrection on the third day.
 - They are invitations to believe.

II. In Which Economy Do We Tend To Operate?

A. Sometimes We Operate In The Old Economy.

1. The old economy is an economy of:
 - a. Scarcity.
 - b. Fear.
2. If I give you some of my cookies.
 - a. Maybe I'll run out.
 - b. Maybe there won't be enough for me.
3. That's how we operate.
 - a. In the world.
 - b. In the church.
4. The 2006 budget for Ascension Lutheran Church.
 - a. Had \$3600 designated for "Benevolence."
 - That's our support for the mission of the larger church.
 - That is money that goes to the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod.
 - #Office of the Bishop.
 - #Outreach.
 - #Youth ministry.
 - #Campus ministry.
 - 46 cents of every dollar.
 - #Is passed on to the national church.
 - *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - #That's how we support things like:
 - *Overseas missionaries.
 - *New congregations.
 - *Seminary education.
 - *World Hunger Appeal.
 - b. It is standard operating procedure here at Ascension.
 - In the middle of the year.
 - #6 months into our budget year.
 - #We pay the first ¼ of our benevolence.
 - We pay no more until the end of the year.
 - #When we wait to see where we stand financially.
 - #Council decides how much of the balance gets paid.
 - c. At our Church Council meeting last month.
 - We had to deal with this issue.
 - d. In 2006 there were congregational expenses.
 - That were not budgeted for.
 - #Our expenses were greater than our income.

- e. There was a motion.
 - Not to pay the balance of our mission support.
 - #To let the quarterly contribution of \$900.
 - *Made in the middle of the year.
 - +Suffice for the entire year.
 - I understand where that motion comes from.
 - #There's a part of me that supports that thinking.
 - *We shouldn't be spending.
 - +More than we're taking in.
 - But I also understand that that part of me.
 - #Is living in the old economy.
 - *Economy of scarcity.
 - *Economy of fear.
 - #If we support the work of the larger church like we should.
 - *We don't begin to tithe our budget.
 - +That's a goal I'd like us to set for ourselves.
 - =We're not there yet.
 - =But we can grow in that direction.
 - Just as you can grow.
 - #In your own giving.
 - *Maybe there won't be enough for us.
 - *Maybe there won't be enough for me.
 - *Maybe we will run out of cookies.
 - Motion was defeated.
- f. There was another motion.
 - To pay our benevolence commitment in full.
 - #As pastor I was thinking:
 - *Wow!
 - *You mean that there are people here.
 - +Who are actually:
 - =Listening.
 - =Paying attention.
 - Not simply to what I'm saying.
 - But to what God is saying through me.
 - #One of the things I've been saying.
 - *God has been saying through me.
 - +We don't just give our leftovers.
 - +God calls us to give our:
 - =Best.
 - =First fruits.
 - To tithe.
 - To be generous.
 - Motion passed.

- g. There was another motion.
 - To increase our mission support for next year.
 - That passed.
 - 5. You will have your chance to have a say on all of this.
 - a. At our annual meeting in two weeks.
 - 9:45.
 - January 28.
 - b. In which economy will we operate?
 - Human economy?
 - #Fear.
 - God's economy?
 - #Faith.
- B. God's Economy Is One Of Abundance.
- 1. God gives us God's very best.
 - a. His own son.
 - b. His only son.
 - Into death.
 - #On the cross.
 - *For our sin.
 - *For our fear.
 - *For our stinginess.
 - c. On the third day.
 - God's new economy is in business.
 - #Forgiveness.
 - #Mercy.
 - #Grace.
 - #New life.
 - *In abundance.
 - 2. Jesus came that we might have life.
 - a. In all of its fullness.
 - b. In all of its abundance.
 - John 10:10.
 - c. To use the imagery of Luke 6:38.
 - Full measure.
 - Pressed down.
 - Shaken together.
 - Overflowing.
 - 3. God gives us everything that we need.
 - a. To do what God calls us to do.
 - Individually.
 - As a congregation.

- b. In God's economy there is never a scarcity.
 - When Jesus is at the wedding.
 - #There is wine for all.
 - *Best of wine.
 - +Wine that is nothing less than:
 - =Blood of Jesus Christ.
 - Which cleanses us from all sin.
 - #1 John 1:7.
 - When Jesus sets the table.
 - #There are loaves and fishes for all.
 - *Matthew 4:14-21.
 - *Mark 6:33-44.
 - *Luke 9:12-17.
 - *John 6:1-15.

Concl: Come to the table.
-It's an invitation.
#To abundance.
#To believe.

Come.
-Let God do the math.