

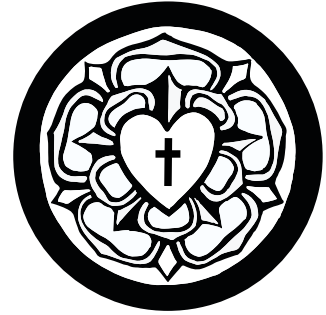
WORSHIP KIT

# It Is the Gift of God



CELEBRATE  
REFORMATION SUNDAY

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## CELEBRATE REFORMATION SUNDAY

### Complete Script For Worship Leaders

- The **Gathering** opening section's hymn is sung by the congregation to the tune Was Frag Ich Nach Der Welt 67 67 66 66, interspersed with words spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation from Psalm 103:

By grace we have been saved, by God's abundant favor.  
It is the gift of God through faith in Christ, our Savior.  
No merit may we claim, no effort of our own;  
It is the gift of God through faith in Christ alone.

- P** With all my heart I praise the Lord, and with all that I am I praise his holy name!
- C** **With all my heart I praise the Lord! I will never forget how kind he has been.**
- P** The Lord forgives our sins, heals us when we are sick, and protects us from death.
- C** **His kindness and love are a crown on our heads.**
- P** Each day that we live, he provides for our needs.
- C** **He gives us the strength of a young eagle.**
- P** How great is God's love for all who worship him?
- C** **Greater than the distance between heaven and earth!**

**P** How far has the Lord taken our sins from us?

**C** **Farther than the distance from east to west!**

When we were dead in sin, God sent his Son to save us.  
It is the gift of God that life eternal gave us.  
By God's abundant grace we with the Lord are raised.  
It is the gift of God, whose name fore'er be praised.

**P** The Lord is always kind to those who worship him,

**C** **and he keeps his promises to their descendants who faithfully obey him.**

**P** God has set up his kingdom in heaven, and he rules the whole creation.

**C** **Let all of God's creation and all that he rules come and praise the Lord.**

**P** With all my heart I praise the Lord.

We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus.  
It is the gift of God that thus his mercy frees us  
To live in holiness the life that God desires.  
It is the gift of God that such good works inspires.

• The **Prayer of the Day** is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

**P** Your Word tells us, Lord, that it is by grace we are saved, not by works, and that it is a gift from God, lest anyone should boast. Let us bask in the blessing of this true gift from you of our salvation from sin, death and the devil, not because of anything we have done but because of what your Son did for us on the cross by dying in our stead for our transgressions and rising to life three days later that we might live a new life in heaven with you. May this miraculous message, uncovered again during the Reformation, which we celebrate this day, be our guiding light and our bold claim in how we live our lives for you. Amen.

• The **Children's Message** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

*Needed: a wrapped present*

**P** Hello, boys and girls. Today we celebrate the Reformation, a time when a man named Martin Luther proclaimed the good news that our salvation in God is a free gift, not something we earn. What is this? (*Hold up the wrapped present and allow the children to respond.*) That's right! It is a gift. If I were to give you this gift, there is nothing I would make you do to receive it. I would not ask you for money to pay for it. I would not ask you to do something special for me. I would just give it to you because I love you.

That is how it is with God and his salvation. He gives it to us free of charge. And he does not tell us that we have to be perfect and do everything right to receive it. He just gives it to us because he loves us.

But in order for us to receive the free gift of salvation from sin, death and the devil, someone had to pay the price for us, and that someone was Jesus. He was born on earth, the Son of God to live a sinless life, then went to the cross to suffer for our sins and die the death that was meant for us. There he defeated the power of sin, death and the devil and then rose victorious three days later on Easter morning to grant us everlasting life in heaven with him.

We are forgiven, we have new life and we are free of the devil, all because of Christ. What a wonderful gift we have in him. Let us pray:

Dear Lord, help us to remember that our salvation is a gift from you because of your great love for us in Jesus, not because of anything we have done. Fill us with joy in that gift always. Amen.

- The **First Lesson**, Isaiah 55:1-11, is spoken by the pastor:

**P** Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

- **Psalm 46, the Reformation Psalm**, is sung by the congregation to the tune St. Anne CM:

God is our Refuge and our Strength, our Helper ever near.  
The Lord of hosts is on our side to shelter us from fear.

Though mountains fall and storms arise and fearful tempests blow,  
Our God is with us, and he leads where peaceful waters flow.

God's steadfast help will surely come as certain as the dawn.  
The Lord of hosts is on our side, so let all fear be gone!

The trembling nations hear his voice, their awesome Sov'reign own:  
"Be still, and know that I am God, and I will reign alone!"

Come and behold what God has done: as adversaries yield,  
He breaks the bow and snaps the spear and burns with fire the shield.

O God our Refuge, God our Strength, accept the praise we bring  
For mercy shown by grace alone through Christ, our Savior-King!

- The **Second Lesson**, Ephesians 2:1-10, is spoken by the pastor:

¶ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- The **Alleluia** verse, is sung by the congregation to the tune Darwall's 148th 66 66 88:

It is God's gift alone that we are justified.  
That wondrous grace was shown when for us God's Son died.  
Alleluia! By faith alone God's gift we own. Alleluia!

- **The Gospel**, John 17:1-10, is spoken by the pastor:

☐ When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

- The **Alleluia** verse, is sung by the congregation to the tune Darwall’s 148th 66 66 88:

It is God’s gift alone that we to Christ belong,  
Who claims us as his own and will our whole life long.  
Alleluia! By faith alone God’s gift we own. Alleluia!

- **The Homily** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ It’s ALL the gift of God, isn’t it? Not just our SALVATION granted us

- by the grace of God (and grace means gift, something not earned)
- through faith in Jesus Christ (and faith implies receiving, acceptance, taking, as you would a gift).

That is a great deal to celebrate at Reformation time, that gift of God, which is our SALVATION.

But God’s gifts begin long before that, don’t they? Before we confess our faith in “Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,” we begin with “God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.”

And all of that is a gift of God, isn’t it? In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther begins his confession of faith by saying, “I believe that God created ME.” And one could spend the rest of a sermon right there.

In a fit of frustration, a youngster will sometimes complain, “Well, I didn’t ask to be born!” And it’s true. You had nothing at all to do with your being born. IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.

As is all the “equipment” you were born with. Luther enumerates things we, probably more often than not, take for granted: things like eyes and ears, and arms and legs, the ability to think, to reason, to relate to our surroundings.

And those surroundings are also gifts of God, aren't they? Sun and rain, soil and atmosphere, food and shelter, community and society, friends and family, the ability to work and earn a living, the opportunity to rest and enjoy and appreciate.

THE GIFT OF GOD—all of it, none of which we really merit or deserve.

And none of it would be worth anything lasting, were it not ... well, where we began in this homily—with the gift of our salvation, granted us

- by the grace of God (and grace means gift, something not earned)
- through faith in Jesus Christ (and faith implies receiving, accepting, taking, as you would a gift).

That is a great deal to celebrate at Reformation time, that gift of God which is our SALVATION—everything for which Jesus Christ came and suffered and died and rose from the dead: namely, that our sins might be forgiven through his holy precious blood, and that we might be claimed as children of God, destined to live with our Lord in his kingdom and to serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

All of it THE GIFT OF GOD, offered us simply for the believing.

Except that believing is not that simple. In the Small Catechism Luther leads us to confess: “I believe ... that I cannot believe, by my own understanding or effort. I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him.”

Another gift of God is required. “But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith.” Even our faith is the gift of God, and the means by which we receive that gift of faith—the Word of God in all the forms it may take, and in all the places where we receive it.

Beginning with the CHURCH, a gift of God, where the Word is proclaimed, forgiveness is offered, God's promises assured.

One of the gifts of the Reformation is not just to mumble, “the grace of God”—but to realize just how gracious our God is, to provide us absolutely ALL THAT WE NEED ... for our life ... and for our salvation ... to make it possible for us to experience God's lavish goodness .. and to share it.

“IT IS THE FREE GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE,” someone in a Bible class once observed.

Tune.....Was Frag Ich Nach Der Welt 67 67 66 66

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