



Date: _____

Series: God is Our Rescuer
Fall Year 2, Lesson 23

Receive God's Gift

Primary Scripture: Ephesians 2:8-10

Key Verses: Ephesians 2:8-10, “God saved you through faith as an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it. Being saved is a gift from God. It’s not the result of anything you’ve done, so no one can brag about it. God has made us what we are. He has created us in Christ Jesus to live lives filled with good works that he has prepared for us to do.”

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

Kids need to be sure about their relationship with God. They need to be confident of their salvation, given as a gift when they receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Kids generally have a self-centered worldview and find it easy to think of salvation as something that is given to them as a reward for being good. God’s salvation is a gift of God’s grace alone. Yet, after we have received it we must give it away to others.

On this Reformation Sunday, you will have the option of recalling Martin Luther’s story: how he discovered the gift of God’s salvation and how he learned to give it away. Our saving God is a mighty fortress, standing against the enemy who would want us to believe we must do good works to obtain salvation.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus saved us FROM sin by taking sin’s punishment on himself when he went to the cross. He offers this to us as a gift that changes our lives.

Jesus in us: Having been saved from sin, we are also saved FOR good works. Jesus works in our lives so that our lives would be filled with change to reflect his presence. Our lives are not just about getting to heaven, but also about bringing a little bit of heaven into our world through the presence of Jesus Christ.

Jesus through us: When we have received this gift of salvation, we must not shirk from sharing it with others who do not know of this gift. There is a great spiritual battle between God and the enemies, Satan and his demons. The free gift of the Gospel defeats Satan but must be given away to others and not merely kept to us.

Kids Church Year 2 - Lesson 23 - 1

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Use a large wrapped gift as a visual of what God has done for us. Wrap the lid and the box separately so that the lid is removable. Place the gift box on a table or floor so it is visible. Talk about the joy we have in receiving gifts. Remind children that gifts are given freely to the receiver even though they may have cost the giver. Gifts are given to show someone loves another person. They are given to bring joy or to help another person.

Read in Ephesians 2:8 how God has given us salvation as a gift:

**If God has given us such a gift, wouldn't we want to give him a gift?
What can we give? We can give God our worship and praise. That is
our way of saying, "I love you, God. Thank you for the gift of Jesus."
As you give him your worship today, it is like giving the gift of your
life. You are saying, "My whole life worships you, oh, God."**

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of music.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Quoting John 10:10, describe how Satan would want to come and steal, kill, and destroy, but Jesus comes to bring life and bring it to the full. To give kids a visual picture, put on some type of robber's disguise. This could be a mask, a handkerchief pulled up over half of one's face, or a stocking cap.

Satan comes to steal like a thief. He wants to pull us away from God any way he can. He would like to pull us away and take our gift of salvation. To accomplish that, he will try to turn us away from Jesus. He might say, "You don't need Jesus because you are good enough all by yourself. You don't do that much wrong, and you really don't need his forgiveness." That is a lie.

Snatch the wrapped gift box to yourself as though you were stealing it.

Continue with:

Or, Satan might say that you have done too many things that are bad, and Jesus would never forgive you and love you.

Set the gift down and pull it toward yourself again while saying:

Satan might even say, "Don't even worry about it. Don't think about Jesus. He is not real. He does not care about you."

Set the gift down and pull it toward yourself again while saying:

Let's take the gift of salvation that God gave us and tell Satan to take a hike.

Firmly hold the gift.

Would you pray with me?

Dear God, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Jesus, thank you for giving your life for us, for dying on the cross to pay the punishment of our sin, for rising again, and being with us right now. Thank you for sending your Holy Spirit to help us believe in you and to give us the gift of your salvation. We need it because we are not good enough to get to heaven on our own. This last week we have sinned against you, and we will think of some of those things right now. Pause.

Some of us can think of ways in which we were mean to another person. Some of us can think of how we might have used your name in vain. We lied. We cheated. We disobeyed our parents. We made fun of another person. Each of us has sinned. We ask you to forgive us. Since you saved us from sin, show us how you saved us for good works. We can give this gift of salvation to other people. Protect us from Satan who wants to rob us of this wonderful gift you have given. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Take the lid off of the gift box so the offerings can be placed inside it. Invite the kids to come forward and to reflect their thankfulness by giving their gifts to the Lord, just as Jesus was God's gift to us.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

“Capture the Gift”

This game is the same as “Steal the Bacon,” except a small wrapped gift is used as the article to be retrieved. The object of the game is to capture the gift and take it back to your team’s side without being touched or tagged by your opponent.

Using masking tape, make two lines on the floor about ten yards apart. Divide the group into two teams and have each team stand behind one of the lines so they are facing each other. The teams should each have the same number of people. Have each team number off so that each person on the team has a number from 1 to (whatever the amount on the team). For example, if there are ten children on the team, each person should have a number from one through ten.

Place the gift box in the center between the lines. Call a number from 1 to (whatever the amount on the team). Each team has a player assigned that number. Those two players run to the gift and try to grab it and then run back to their side without being tagged by the other player. *(Sometimes it is easier to tag the other player than to grab the gift.)*

This is a highly active game so caution is needed to avoid collisions. Also, this game is highly participatory. If you have many kids in Kids Church, you may want to have each team made up of only five runners, while everyone else watches and cheers for their team. (Girls versus boys, third grade versus fourth grade, etc.)

After the game, have the kids come together and say:

Satan wants to steal the gift of salvation and take it away. He does that by trying to get people to believe that they can get to heaven just by doing good things, not by receiving the gift of God. This game also teaches us that the gift of salvation is supposed to be taken by

us and carried back into the world for those who do not know about Jesus.

Option Two: "Pass the Gift"

You'll need a gift-wrap bow for each circle of kids in this game. Before kids arrive, create one or more circles, 6-8 feet across, on the floor using tape or rope, etc. This will help kids "circle up" with a minimum of difficulty and time-loss.

Start by announcing:

The name of this game is "Pass the Gift". In a minute we're going to gather in (a) circle(s). I'm going to choose one person in each circle to be in the middle. The object of the game is for the rest of the people in the circle to pass this gift (hold up the gift-wrap bow) to others behind their backs without the person in the middle discovering where the gift is. If the person in the middle thinks they know who has the gift, they should point at that person. If the middle person points at you, you must immediately show them your hands. If you have the bow in your hands, you become "it" and you trade places with the person in the middle. I will choose who the person in the middle will be.

Have kids gather around the circles on the floor until they're standing shoulder-to-shoulder, facing inward, hands behind their backs. Choose one child in each circle to stand in the middle of that circle. Then have the kids-in-the-middle close their eyes while you walk around the outside of the circle. Secretly pass a gift-bow to one person in each circle, and then invite the in-the-middle kids to open their eyes. Play as time allows. Afterwards gather the kids together and discuss:

God has given us the free gift of eternal life through Jesus' death and rising again. And God has told us to pass that gift on to others, so they can live in heaven forever, too. But Satan wants to grab the gift of salvation and take it away. He does that by...

- ♦ **Trying to get people to believe that they can get to heaven just by doing good things, and not by the gift of God.**
- ♦ **Or Satan might say that you have done too many things that are bad, and Jesus would never forgive you and love you.**
- ♦ **Satan might even say, "Don't even think about Jesus. He is not real. He does not care about you." But Satan is a liar, and it's fun to trick him and pass the gift of salvation to others.**

Let's pray: Lord, help us pass the gift along, and never let Satan discourage us from telling others about Jesus' wonderful love. Thank you for your faithfulness in answering our prayers, and help us to serve you in every way that we can. Amen.

Bible Reading:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Read Luke 18:10-14. Take the altar cross and place it in the wrapped gift box that was used earlier. Ask:

In our Bible reading just now, who was it that received the gift of God's forgiveness? *(The tax collector who knew that he needed it.)*

Jesus sacrificed his life so that he might give us this gift. Satan will do everything he can to keep us from receiving it.

Take the gift box with the cross and move through the audience. To interview a child, hand him the gift box and ask him if he knows for sure if he is going to heaven when he dies. Read Ephesians 2:8, 9. Teach clearly that we are saved completely as a gift and not by our works. We simply need to hold our hands out and receive the gift by faith. When we receive the gift of Jesus' death and resurrection as a payment for our sins, we are saved and know we will go to heaven when we die.

Application:

Option One: Show the video *The Storykeepers A.D. 64* episode "Sink or Swim." (Approx 26 minutes including the opening segment describing the setting and people in the story.) This video will highlight three sections of scripture:

- Jesus' story of the Pharisee and sinner
- Jesus' healing of a paralyzed man
- Jesus' metaphor of building your house on a rock

Option Two: Have Martin Luther appear and present his story. See script, "Martin Luther Discovers a Gift" (attached). Questions you might ask after Luther is finished:

- **What made Martin Luther so frightened he fell to the ground?** *(lightning storm)*
- **Why was he so afraid to die?** *(He knew he hadn't done enough good things to earn heaven)*
- **What did he promise to do if God saved his life?** *(He promised he would become a monk)*
- **Did that make him happy?** *(No)*
- **How did he finally find peace?** *(He discovered in the Bible that heaven is a free gift – all you have to do is believe in Jesus and you will be forgiven of all your sins and saved forever in heaven)*



Witness

Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Ask kids if they have ever told a friend about Jesus. Interview any who have. Did they talk about heaven? About the cross? If not, gently suggest ways they could have.

If no one has a story about sharing their faith, ask for two volunteers to role-play. Have one volunteer pretend not to know anything about Jesus or Christianity and the other to be a friend who tells about Jesus. What would they tell their friend based on today's worship? Have others take turns role-playing. Key points to emphasize:

- God loves all people and wants everyone to go to heaven.
- All people are sinners. Their sin separates them from God.
- Jesus died to take away the sins of all people.
- Anyone who believes in Jesus will live with him in heaven forever.
- Heaven is a free gift – available to everyone, just by believing in Jesus.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Safety and Security: Safety and security procedures are important for each church to carefully define and implement according to their unique needs. The security, safety, illness and accident procedures described in this curriculum are provided for example purposes only and may not be appropriate, applicable or adequate for every situation. Each church is responsible for determining whether any security, safety, illness and accident procedures contained in the curriculum are appropriate, applicable or adequate for its unique situation. The activities described in this curriculum require adult supervision and may not be suitable for each child and each situation. Each church is responsible for ensuring that adequate adult supervision is provided for all activities and for determining whether an activity is appropriate for each child and each situation. Kids Kount Publishing disclaims all liability for the implementation of any procedures or the performance of any activities described in this curriculum.

Martin Luther Discovers A Gift

(A costumed Martin Luther appears on stage with a Bible. He sets the Bible on top of the gift box that has been used in this lesson. This will provide a visual illustration of the gift that he discovered through the Bible.)

Hello, I am Martin Luther. I have come from almost 500 years in history to tell you my story today. Actually, my intent is to share with you the gift that I discovered almost 500 years ago. Here is my story of how I discovered the gift...

I was born in the land of Germany over 500 years ago. As I grew up, my family and most people in the village went to church regularly. We did many religious things but most people were afraid of God, me included. In fact, one time when I was returning from the university back to my hometown, I was caught in a great storm. There was fierce thunder and a bolt of lightning struck nearby. I was filled with the fear of death. I just knew that God was going to strike me down. So I fell down in a heap and I cried out to a saint. I said, "Help me Saint Anne, and I will become a monk." I didn't know then that we didn't have to pray to saints. They couldn't hear us, anyway. I did not know that I should pray directly to God for help.

I was afraid of God. I was afraid that he was always angry with me. I was afraid that I would die in that terrible storm, that lightning would sear through my body, and that I would go to purgatory or hell if I died. I knew that I had not done enough good things to earn my way to heaven.

I lived through that storm and kept my vow – I decided that I would study to be a very religious person — a monk. I would withdraw from the world and devote myself to learning more about God.

While I was a monk I was troubled. It seemed that the more I tried to do the things that pleased God, the more I realized how many other things I did wrong. Certainly God was not pleased with me because I was so far from being perfect. The more I tried the more I fell behind. I would beat myself on the back trying to purge the sin out of me. I prayed louder and longer than anyone else. No matter what I did, it never seemed enough. It seemed that God was always angry with me, and I could not find any love in him at all.

However, during this time I began to study the Bible. I found the most wonderful gift that changed my life. It was a truth that I would share with the world. It's a truth that I share with you today. This is

what it says in the Bible. *“God saved you through faith in an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it. Being saved is a gift from God. It’s not the result of anything you’ve done so no one can brag about it.”* It’s right here in Ephesians 2:8-9.

What this means is that I can’t earn heaven from God. I can only receive it as a gift he gives to me. Do you earn presents from your mom and dad on your birthday? Of course not. They give them to you because they love you, and so it is with God. (Opening the box and taking out the cross.) The gift that God gives me is his son, Jesus, who died on the cross to take the punishment of my sin. It was a horrible punishment and a terrible death. But he did it for me so I would never have to. Now I know that when I die I will go to heaven because I now hold the gift God has given me.

The more I read the Bible, the more I found out how wonderful and kind God is; the more I found out about how he wants all people to have the gift. I looked around and saw the church teaching people that they had to earn their way to heaven. In fact, the church was selling sheets of paper that said if you give enough money to the church your sins could then be forgiven. The church proclaimed you could buy forgiveness for sins you hadn’t even done yet. Do you think this is right?

Of course it is not. It’s not in the Bible at all. It was wrong, and someone had to say so. That’s when I played a “trick-or treat” trick. On Halloween, I took a sheet of paper and I wrote down 95 things about which the church needed to find the truth — as found in the Bible. I was challenging the church leaders to debate these issues.

On October 31, 1517, with a hammer and nails I nailed the sheet to the church door in the town of Wittenburg, Germany. In the weeks that followed, there was a great commotion. Very few people had ever challenged what the church taught, even if the church taught things that were not in the Bible. Soon everyone was talking about it. We had our debate and our discussion. I talked with the leaders of the church. I told them we must teach what the Bible teaches. I told them that other people must receive God’s salvation in Jesus as a gift.

Do you know what they did? They kicked me out of the church, and they even made me a wanted man. My life was in danger, but it did not matter. What was important was that other people were finding the truth of the Bible and began to receive the gift of Jesus. They stopped trusting their own abilities of earning their way to heaven. They even made a new church. Many of these people who followed my teachings called themselves Lutherans. What a funny name for a church. It didn’t matter though. What mattered was finally people

were enjoying the gift that God wants to give to every person, the gift of Jesus.

Boys and girls, do you have the gift? Do you trust Jesus as your Savior? If so, you'll learn to love God more every day, just as I did. If not, then you need to trust him today. Don't try to earn your own way to heaven; it can't be done. Take God's gift instead.

Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- large wrapped gift with a removable lid

The Power of the Cross:

- robber's disguise (This could be a mask, a handkerchief pulled up over half of one's face, or a stocking cap.)
- gift from the opening theme

Offering:

- gift from the opening theme

Learning Game:

Option One:

- another small wrapped gift

Option Two:

- one gift-wrap bow for each group
- one circle (6-8 feet across) marked on the floor for each group

Bible Reading:

- video *The Storykeepers A.D. 64* (episode "Sink or Swim") by Shepherd Ltd. 1995.

OR

- Martin Luther costume (black pastor's or choir robe will work well; a graduate's mortar board "hat" will add to the effect)
- gift box
- altar cross