

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany January 21, 2018

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

**LUTHERAN**

# **LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY**

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the  
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

January 18, 2018 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134

*Presented as a part of the bible study/worship at a weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site, St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland (First Sunday of the month at 11:00am) and used by Lutherans in Africa. Contact [puritaspastor@hotmail.com](mailto:puritaspastor@hotmail.com) for details.*



<http://www.ahtanumpioneer.org/sermons.html> Ahtanum Pioneer Church is a conservative, evangelical church with a high view of God's word. Yakima, WA

### **Hymn of the Day**

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 839   The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 512**

**“O Christ, our true and only light”**

This hymn has a long history in Lutheran hymnals, and Reformed hymnals and Moravian hymnals and Baptist hymnals and Presbyterian hymnals and ...

“Catherine Winkworth is "the most gifted translator of any foreign sacred lyrics into our tongue, after Dr. Neale and John Wesley; and in practical services rendered, taking quality with quantity, the first of those who have laboured upon German hymns. Our knowledge of them is due to her more largely than to any or all other translators; and by her two series of *Lyra Germanica*, her *Chorale Book*, and her *Christian Singers of Germany*, she has laid all English-speaking Christians under lasting obligation." --Annotations of the Hymnal, Charles Hutchins, M.A., 1872..."

[https://hymnary.org/text/o\\_christ\\_our\\_true\\_and\\_only\\_light](https://hymnary.org/text/o_christ_our_true_and_only_light)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDFOWk3Cwfs> Follow along from TLH

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4BaEacSNfg> Sing it as the “sending hymn” from ELW (Evangelical Lutheran Worship), Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Worcester, MA

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

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**Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the same reading** (*Next Week: Deuteronomy 18:15-20; RCL, the same reading*)

*“Today is the day to tell the story of Jonah, for this is its only appearance in the regular lectionary cycle.*

*“Jonah is often thought of as a children's story complete with a whale, but the real message of Jonah is an adult one with an opportunity to stretch our understanding of God and salvation. The focus text is of God's second call to Jonah and his less than enthusiastic response. However, the story of Jonah is a whole piece and needs to be told from beginning to end...*

*The Book of Jonah is read in the Jewish calendar on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when Jews confess their sins against God and neighbor. Offering Jonah to the congregation yields the same type of contemplation on God's attributes that we too depend on for salvation. How willing are we to let God be God? Salvation is pure gift and grace and Jonah's story reminds us that we do not own that grace, nor is it ours to dole out as we wish. God will be forgiving because that is the very heart of God...”*

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=229](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=229) [Beth L. Tanner](#)  
Professor of Old Testament, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, NJ

## Jonah Goes to Nineveh

3 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, <sup>[a]</sup> three days' journey in breadth. <sup>[b]</sup> <sup>4</sup> Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

## The People of Nineveh Repent

<sup>6</sup> *The word reached<sup>[c]</sup> the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.* <sup>7</sup> *And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water,* <sup>8</sup> *but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.* <sup>9</sup> *Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”*

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

- a. [Jonah 3:3](#) Hebrew *a great city to God*
- b. [Jonah 3:3](#) Or *a visit was a three days' journey*
- c. [Jonah 3:6](#) Or *had reached*

“Jonah is more than just a big fish tale.

Jonah is more than just a big fish tale. It is a humorous story with a point, and it is worth telling the whole story in your sermon, lingering on the details.

If we follow the lectionary reading, we enter the story of Jonah right in the middle of the action. “The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time.” We all know what happened the first time. God said, “Get up and go to Ninevah ... and Jonah got up and ran away towards Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.”

Jonah’s no Peter, Andrew, James, or John. He doesn’t leave what he’s doing and immediately follow God’s call. He jumps on the first boat going in the opposite direction and he hides in the hold of the ship, hoping that somehow God won’t take notice. It’s as if Peter, Andrew, James, and John, upon encountering Jesus, jumped into their fishing boats and rowed like madmen for the opposite shore, as far away from this dangerous itinerant preacher as they could get.

Jonah did just that, trying to get as far away from the LORD, and the LORD’s bizarre instructions, as he could get. Go to Nineveh? The capital of the Assyrian Empire, that destroyer of Israel, that brutal occupying force. It was unthinkable.

So Jonah runs away, but God sends a storm. You might review the story for your congregation. The sailors are more pious than Jonah but they eventually reluctantly throw Jonah overboard. The sea calms down immediately, and God appoints a big fish to swallow Jonah...

The sea in the ancient Near East, of course, is the symbol of chaos, of danger, of wildness. But even in the heart of the seas, God hears Jonah's prayer. God speaks to the great fish, and the fish vomits him out onto dry land.

That's where we enter the story. "The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, "Get up and go to Ninevah, that great city." And, this time, still covered in sea water and fish vomit, Jonah obeys. He walks into the city, one day's journey, and preaches the shortest sermon ever recorded:

It's a sermon of 5 words in Hebrew -- "Forty days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown!"

The response is electric. Immediately, the people of Nineveh believe God, and here's where the humor builds. The people declare a fast. The king, not to be outdone, orders human and animal alike to fast and put on sackcloth. Then all those sackcloth-covered cows and sheep and people bellow out their repentance to God, and God changes his mind about the punishment, and does not bring it about.

We would think Jonah would be ecstatic. After all, he's the only really successful prophet in the whole Bible. He has brought about a mass conversion that Billy Graham could only aspire to. Every inhabitant of the city, human and animal alike, has come forward for the altar call. Jonah should be ecstatic.

But Jonah is not ecstatic. Jonah is mad. "Ah, LORD, is this not what I said would happen when I was still in my own territory? That's why I fled to Tarshish in the first place. Because I know that you are a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing."

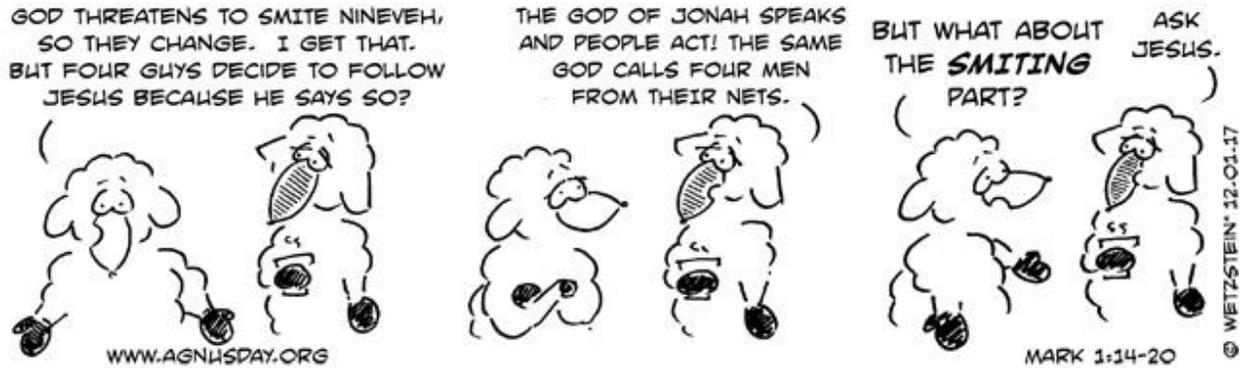
Jonah, of course, is quoting the LORD's own self-description (from Exodus 34:6) a description taken up by prophets and psalmists throughout Israel's history to remind God of God's own nature. But in Jonah's mouth, it is an accusation: You, God, are gracious and merciful. I KNEW this would happen! I declared your judgment on this sinful city, and you changed your mind!

Here's the thing, you see, here's the thing all of us have found out about following the call of God in and through the waters: God is God and does not act as we think the Almighty should act. In good faith, we follow where we hear God's call, we go to the city, or the suburb, or to small town and rural America, and we are prepared to bring God's word to that place, and what we find is that *God is already there before us*. We find that no people, and no place, not even Nineveh, can properly be called God-forsaken...

As you preach this sermon, you might ask your listeners to think of a person that they find difficult to love...Then proclaim to them that God loves that person, and that God loves them, too. The same God who gave Jonah a second chance gives the people of Nineveh a second chance, and we can't begrudge that kind of mercy. This is a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, a God we know most fully in Jesus Christ.

And that, my friends, is certainly a Gospel story worth preaching."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2347](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2347) [Kathryn M. Schifferdecker](#) Associate Professor of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.



**Psalm 62; RCL, Psalm 62:5-12** (*Psalm 111; RCL, the same reading*)

**“Title.** *To the Chief Musician, to Jeduthun. This is the second Psalm which is dedicated to Jeduthun, or Ethan, the former one being the thirty-ninth, a Psalm which is almost a twin with this in many respects, containing in the original the word translated only four times as this does six. We shall meet with two other Psalms similarly appointed for Jeduthun: namely, Psalms 77, and 89. The sons of Jeduthun were porters or doorkeepers, according to 1Ch 16:42. Those who serve well make the best of singers, and those who occupy the highest posts in the choir must not be ashamed to wait at the posts of the doors of the Lord's house. A PSALM OF DAVID. Even had not the signature of the royal poet been here placed, we should have been sure from internal evidence that he alone penned these stanzas; they are truly Davidic. From the sixfold use of the word ac or only, we have been wont to call it THE ONLY PSALM.*

**Division.** *The Psalmist has marked his own pauses, by inserting SELAH at the end of [Psalms 62:4](#) [Psalms 62:8](#) . His true and sole confidence in God laughs to scorn all its enemies. When this Psalm was composed it was not necessary for us to know, since true faith is always in season, and is usually under trial. Moreover, the sentiments here uttered are suitable to occasions which are very frequent in a believer's life, and therefore no one historic incident is needful for their explanation...” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/treasury-of-david/psalms-62-1.html>*

## My Soul Waits for God Alone

**To the choirmaster: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.**

62 For God alone my soul waits in silence;  
from him comes my salvation.

<sup>2</sup> He alone is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.

<sup>3</sup> How long will all of you attack a man  
to batter him,  
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?

<sup>4</sup> They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.  
They take pleasure in falsehood.

They bless with their mouths,  
but inwardly they curse. **Selah**

<sup>5</sup> *For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,  
for my hope is from him.*

<sup>6</sup> *He only is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.*

<sup>7</sup> *On God rests my salvation and my glory;  
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.*

<sup>8</sup> *Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your heart before him;  
God is a refuge for us. **Selah***

<sup>9</sup> *Those of low estate are but a breath;  
those of high estate are a delusion;  
in the balances they go up;  
they are together lighter than a breath.*

<sup>10</sup> *Put no trust in extortion;  
set no vain hopes on robbery;  
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.*

<sup>11</sup> *Once God has spoken;  
twice have I heard this:*

*that power belongs to God,*

<sup>12</sup> *and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.*

*For you will render to a man  
according to his work.*

“In this Psalm the royal singer casts himself entirely on God. Here we see the foundation of his expectation laid bare. He has no confidence anywhere but in God. The Psalm begins in the original with the word “Only.” I always call it “The ‘only’ Psalm” because it harps upon that word. David had no mixed reliance; he had not built upon a foundation partly of iron and partly of clay; it was all in harmony throughout; his trust was in the Lord alone.

Psalms 62:1. *Truly-*

Or, as it is in the margin, “Only” —

Psalms 62:1. *My soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.*

It is a blessed thing to wait truly and only upon God. You have proved everything else to be a failure, and now you hang upon the bare arm of God alone. There is certainly enough for you to depend upon there. Most people want something to see, something tangible to the senses, to be the object of their confidence; but David says, “Only my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.” It is already on the road; it is coming now; it is a salvation from present trouble and from present temptation. A complete salvation is on the road for all those whose souls are waiting only upon God...”

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/spe/psalms-62.html> Spurgeon's Verse Expositions of the Bible

**1 Corinthians 7:29-31 (32-36); RCL, the same reading (1 Corinthians 8:1-13; RCL, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13)**

*“The Second Lesson prescribed for any given Sunday in the Revised Common Lectionary does not usually cohere with the core message of the Gospel for the Day.*

*Except on special occasions, it is typically a passage that is part of a continuous reading within Acts, an epistle, or Revelation, and given attention over several weeks.*

*But there are fortuitous occasions when the Second Lesson does cohere thematically with the Gospel for the Day. This day is one of them. The lesson from 1 Corinthians, like the Gospel (Mark 1:14-20), has to do with time and the place of the believer within it...” Continued after the reading)*

<sup>29</sup>This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, <sup>30</sup>and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, <sup>31</sup>and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

<sup>32</sup>*I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. <sup>33</sup>But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, <sup>34</sup>and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. <sup>35</sup>I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.*

<sup>36</sup>*If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed,<sup>[a]</sup> if his<sup>[b]</sup> passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin.*

- a. [1 Corinthians 7:36](#) Greek *virgin*; also verses [37](#), [38](#)
- b. [1 Corinthians 7:36](#) Or *her*

“...What Paul writes in 1 Corinthians is a response to questions from the community of believers at Corinth. Prior to the passage assigned for today, he has taken up a series of issues. He writes that the single life is better, but recommends marriage to help prevent sexual immorality (7:1-9). He urges that believers not divorce one another, although conceding that divorce might be necessary in some cases (7:10-16). And he counsels those who become Christians not to make changes. For example, slaves should not think that they must become free, but accept freedom if it is offered (7:11-24).

Now Paul turns again to the matter of singles and married couples. He recommends that they remain in their present state (7:25-28). The basis for his recommendation is: "in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are" (7:26). In short, Paul's imminent

eschatology (his sense of the end of all things coming soon) governs all that is being said. It is the foundation for the way of life that he recommends.

This entire discussion leads us to the brief passage assigned for today. It is especially important to notice Paul's use of the words "as though not" (*hōs mē*) five times over in these three verses. So, Paul says, one is to live "as though not" married, mourning, rejoicing, making purchases, and (in summation) dealing with the world in general...

People who hear this passage read at worship will find it puzzling. They do not have a sense of the imminent coming of Christ, and they can hardly live day-to-day "as though not" having dealings with the world. It is important therefore, if this text is the basis for a sermon, to set it in the context of 1 Corinthians and within the larger framework of Paul's ethical teaching, as done here.

In the end, the primary message of this text is that nothing in this world can compare to the eternal fellowship we have with God and Christ. Dealing with the world is inevitable and important – we need to deal with it well for the sake of our families, our nation, and ourselves. But we need to maintain an "eschatological reserve," knowing that this is not all there is, for we look to the eternal beyond that which is passing away."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=228](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=228) [Arland J. Hultgren](#)

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#### THE MARK CHALLENGE – LECTIONARY YEAR B 2017-18

And I am now on verse?

### **“The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 1st Chapter”**

**Mark 1:14-20; RCL, the same reading** (*Mark 1:21-28; RCL, the same reading*)

*“Jesus begins his ministry by proclaiming the “good news” of the gospel, which is that “the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near” (Mark 1:15).*

*Jesus’ coming was the “fullness of time,” because he is the messenger promised in the Old Testament (Galatians 4:4, Ephesians 1:10). Jesus repeats the message of John the Baptist, “Repent and believe in the good news.”*

*The emphasis of Mark’s gospel is that Jesus’ coming is the gospel, the “good news,” a term that in the first fifteen verses of the gospel occurs three times.*

*Since last Sunday’s story is from the Gospel of John, we don’t know the exact sequence of that text with this one from Mark, but the theme is the same. Today’s text continues the story from last Sunday, that is, the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as he calls his first disciples. Last Sunday we heard Jesus called Philip and Nathanael. In today’s story he calls four fishermen at the Sea of Galilee -- Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John...”*

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2315](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2315) [Michael Rogness](#)

Professor of Preaching and Professor Emeritus of Homiletic, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

## Jesus Begins His Ministry

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;<sup>[a]</sup> repent and believe in the gospel."

## Jesus Calls the First Disciples

<sup>16</sup> Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>18</sup> And **immediately** they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup> And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup> And **immediately** he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

- a. [Mark 1:15](#) Or *the kingdom of God has come near*
- b. [Mark 1:17](#) The Greek word *anthropoi* refers here to both men and women

**“This is the Gospel of the Lord”**      **“Praise to You, O Christ”**

The text for the Third Sunday after Epiphany continues the dramatic action in the Gospel of Mark.

Without a nativity story we are "immediately" (Greek, *euthus*) (1:10) into the ministry of Jesus with the baptism of Jesus and the voice from heaven (1:9-11)...

Jesus' call of engagement in God's rule is present in two imperatives. The first is a call "to repent" expresses immediacy at a point in time; it is time to turn around in response to the call of discipleship. This call is followed up with a second imperative "to believe," which expresses a continuing response to the obedience of following. The object of believing is "the good news" of God's reign present in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (1:15).

Examples of the immediacy of Jesus' call to turn around and believe are present in the calling of Simon, Andrew, James and John. The scene is the shore of the Sea of Galilee, a lake about 12 miles long and 8 miles at its widest point. The lake is harp-shaped and also known by the name, *Chinnereth*, from the Hebrew word for a harp-like instrument.

Perhaps it is a day like any other day in the life of those who fish these sometimes treacherous waters. Wind storms come up quickly as a Northwester blows in from the Mediterranean Sea and over the hill country that surrounds the northwestern shore of the lake. Suddenly and without warning the boats are in danger as the waves threaten to overpower the boats. A story in Mark 4:35-41 describes a crossing of the disciples who encounter such a wind storm on the lake.

Simon and Andrew, perhaps weary from a night of fishing, are still plying their nets when a stranger approaches them on the shore in the person of Jesus. The dialogue is brief. In fact it might have appeared to them that this stranger was not that familiar with their trade. Jesus' words must have sounded strange as he doesn't talk about the usual fishing for lake trout but fishing for people? Now to rugged men of the sea this would have no correlation with their experience.

The text gives us no clue to what is going on inside their heads at such a strange proposal. There was no preparation. The only note we get from the text is the second occurrence of "immediately" (Greek, *euthus*) in the Gospel of Mark as Simon and Andrew "immediately leave their nets and follow him" (1:18). All we can say about the call is that "the kingdom of God" has broken into their lives in the immediacy of Jesus' call. There are also two other fishermen on the shore mending their nets, James and John, sons of their father Zebedee. The call of Jesus to them is the same and their response is the same. They leave their livelihood and their father and "immediately" follow this stranger (1:20).

These are epiphany moments early in the Gospel. As readers and hearers, we too have no preparation this early in the Gospel for such a story. Like the first four followers, we too have been caught off guard. But then isn't this why we identify with this story? God in Jesus Christ comes to us in our most unexpected moments. God's kingdom, God's kingly reign and rule in our lives breaks in even "immediately" as pure gift..."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1121](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1121) [Paul S. Berge](#)  
Emeritus Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

"Join Profs. Rolf Jacobson, Karoline Lewis, David Lose, and Matt Skinner for a conversation around preaching the lectionary texts for the third Sunday after Epiphany: Jonah 3:1-5, 10, Psalm 62:5-12 (6), 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Mark 1:14-20."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/brainwave.aspx?podcast\\_id=256](https://www.workingpreacher.org/brainwave.aspx?podcast_id=256)



[Rolf Jacobson](#), [Karoline Lewis](#), [David Lose](#), [Matt Skinner](#)



2009-01-21 — "Catch and Release" has become a very popular form of fishing among us. This is when children of well-meaning parents are baptized and then never seen again.

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