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Title: Lessons from Lasso: The Diamond Dogs

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We are continuing our series, Lessons from Lasso, looking at what we learn about life from the television show Ted Lasso and some early scenes from Jesus' ministry. The first week we learned to Be a Goldfish, that our lives are not oriented in the past, rather they are oriented in God's future. Last week, we learned to believe, that the signs of

the kingdom of God are around us if we are only willing to have the vision and spirit to see and experience these signs. We've learned what it means as followers of Jesus to do the right-est thing and last week we learned that a life of faith calls us to be curious, rather than judgmental.

Today we are going to be focusing on Ted Lasso's people, his tight-knit group of friends and coaches that together make up The Diamond Dogs, a concept introduced in season one, episode eight. Ted is in a bit of a rough stretch in his life, having gone through a divorce, dealing with panic attacks. He consults his newly assembled group of coaches and friends, Coach Beard, Team General Manager Higgins, and Coach Nate to seek their counsel. Eventually, Roy Kent will be added to this group of Diamond Dogs.

Since that time, the relationship of the "Diamond Dogs" to one another has been a running theme of the show. The way this group supports each other, loves one another, occasional struggles with each other, just doing life in general with one another. Let's watch the scene where the Diamond Dogs come together.

Jesus had those who traveled with him, we know about the twelve disciples, but we also suspect he had a pretty good group of those who traveled with him, who walked alongside him, and they are not the people one would expect would travel around with the Messiah. The Gospel of Luke tells his version of how the first disciples are called

"One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret when the crowd pressed in around him to hear God's word. ² Jesus saw two boats sitting by

the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets. ³ Jesus boarded one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, then asked him to row out a little distance from the shore. Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.⁴ When he finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch."⁵ Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets."⁶ So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting. ⁷ They signaled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they were about to sink. ⁸ When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!" ⁹ Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught. ¹⁰ James and John, Zebedee's sons, were Simon's partners and they were amazed too. Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people." ¹¹ As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus." (Luke 5:1-11)

Several things stand out to me about the Christian life from the story of the calling of the first disciples.

First, Jesus does not do life alone.

Jesus is the Messiah, the one we would come to know as Savior, Emmanuel, God with us. This is who Jesus is... and yet...he cannot do it alone. He needs others. He needs people to walk alongside him and he needs people to participate in God's mission with him.

Ted Lasso is the Head Coach of AFC Richmond. He is the one who goes to the press conferences, he's the one who must provide answers when things go wrong...yet... Ted also teaches us the lesson that we cannot do it alone. We need others to do life with us. It's why, as he is trying to figure out something going on in his life, he gathers others to be in the conversation. He gathers Nate, Coach Beard, Higgins, and he even tries to gather Roy Kent, who he will eventually win over.

We know that one of the things that have been laid bare over the last couple of years is that isolation is not good for us. It's not spiritually healthy. A lack of community takes its toll on us and our culture at large. Social media has not helped because we spend an hour scrolling through our phones seeing how wonderful life is for everyone else, except for me. And even though we know that life isn't that wonderful for everyone else, it furthers our sense of isolation. We do need time alone and some of us need more time alone, so I don't want to confuse time alone with isolation. Even Jesus knew he could not do life alone. Ted Lasso knows he cannot do life alone. They both teach

us that we cannot do life alone. It's why we should be passionate that the church not become a club AND we should be passionate about the church being a place of connection, of real, honest connection. There are seasons when we need to do life alone, I know I have seasons when I pull back from others, but when we are ready, it is needed, and it will eventually be, this needs to be a place of connection.

Here is the second thing I noticed: There are no prerequisites to following Jesus.

Sometimes, the church can't get out of our way when it comes to being a community that follows Jesus. Several years ago, I was in Boston and passed a church that had carved into the stone atop the door, "All Are Welcome" and then on the door they are posted a sign that said, "No Trespassing". How many churches, while maybe not having that on their door, practice that. All Are Welcome, except if you are a female and you want to preach or be in church leadership. All are welcome, except if you are gay or lesbian and you want to participate in the life of the church. All are welcome, except if you can't give a certain amount to the church.

Here, though we see a gracious invitation by Jesus, row out further, get into the deep water, don't just stay here on the surface and amazing things will happen. Row out a little further, says Jesus, go a little farther beyond where you currently are and see what happens.

"Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people." ¹¹ As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus." Luke 5:11

This is invitation so powerful that these people leave everything to follow Jesus.

And third: No special skills are required to follow Jesus.

These first disciples fish for a living. In Jesus' day, to be a disciple of a rabbi like Jesus took years of training and practice. You had to memorize the entire Torah, which we know as the first five books of the Old Testament. That was just the beginning of training. Jesus changes that. We don't know any skills or qualifications that Simon Peter, James, or John has, other than fishing, but Jesus calls them as disciples. At this moment, when these disciples are called, Jesus changes the whole, traditional, long-standing model of discipleship. You are called, he says to them, and you are now my disciples. You are now my people. One cannot emphasize enough how much Jesus' action turned over the religious status quo. There are no tests of faith,

nothing of that sort. Only a willingness to have one's life changed, to live differently. Let's take Simon, who would come to be known as Peter. He's a fisherman and according to the text, not a very good one at this moment. The Gospel of Mark portrays him as inept at best, he would be the last one to deny Jesus, and later, Paul would find Peter to be shallow and unconvincing. And yet... he is one of Jesus' closet disciples.

As Ted brings his Diamond Dogs together, we see a similar theme. Coach Beard is a lifelong assistant football coach who struggles in romantic relationships and is kind of quiet. Nate, who as the show goes along, oh Nate, but Nate is the towel and water person of the team, ignored by virtually everyone in the building until Ted gives him a place at the table. Higgins is an understated family man, trying to balance home life and being the general manager of the club. People are always taking his office space, moving him around, "because he won't mind." Ted gives him a place that he does not have. And eventually, the retired player turned coach Roy Kent will take his place in the Diamond Dogs, providing him relationships and friendships he never knew he needed.

No special skills are required to follow Jesus. No previous experience is required to follow Jesus. We cannot do life alone.

The point of Jesus calling his disciples and Ted bringing the Diamond Dogs together is that life, when centered in an authentic love for God and love for people, can be different.

There are no barriers to this life, to the life God wants for each of us. A life rooted in following Christ with others, a life where we do the Christian life together...it changes everything.