The first teacher our children ever had was Miss Linda. Miss Linda is an Air Force veteran and she means business. Those first few weeks were rough on me - dropping my precious child off to another woman, wondering all day if he was getting enough sleep or eating on the schedule I so carefully had written out. But the thing is - Hank was never unsafe. Did he sleep well? Not at first. But was he safe? Yes. Did he stay on his bottle schedule? No. But did he get fed when he was hungry? Yes.

By the time our second child came to Miss Linda’s room, I could tell when a new baby would become a permanent classmate or get whisked back to the known routine of home. Mothers and fathers alike would have this look on their face that said, “This is not the way I do things. This is not how it is supposed to be done.” They’d try for a few days but Miss Linda’s always gruff with adults, always equally non-acquiescent with babies kind-of-way did not follow the pattern they knew.

If you looked at Miss Linda’s shelf, you could see a series of post-it notes, each lined out with children’s names and birthdates, going back years before, the notes curling on their edges. There were pictures cut out and taped, mementos saved. Often, there was a brown lunch bag stapled at the top with a child’s name written in marker across the front and inside, a few gifts - always a child’s prayer book - given out chronologically to those post-it note names, without fail. A pattern of love lived out.

It could be the understatement of the 21st century to say there are competing patterns in every corner of the world, different logos - words, logic - that sound as cacophonous as a clanging cymbal. In all the noise, it can be hard to discern which logos is the Logos, with a capital “L.” Which Word is ultimate, holy. Even if we were to do a thought experiment that lifted the sacred out of the secular, that tried to separate things of this world and things of God, the patterns are certainly not singular and are muddled enough by the humanness of dogma and interpretation, of how the logos of the world creeps its way into our theologies.
It’s like this, Barbara Brown Taylor says when talking about “making God up:” “All you have to do is dust my Bible for fingerprints to find the favorite parts and the ignored ones - or follow my tracks on Google, or check my book purchases on Amazon, or poll my friends. I stick very close to sources that support my view of reality.” These life patterns, she says, help her build what she calls “my divine mosaic, which reflects my hopes and fears about God all the way from my early childhood until now...My view of God is my own creation, made from bits and pieces of received or perceived knowledge about divine reality that I hope or fear are true. My mosaic has my fingerprints all over it....How does one get beyond that? How do any of us actively pursue the God we did not make up?” (Holy Envy, 188-9)

Well, we know the answer, don’t we? It isn’t that we don’t know how to pursue God - the incarnation has the pattern written all over it.

Do you remember what McLaren said this week in our chapter? “If we want to know what God is like and what the universe is about, we should pay attention to the logic, meaning, wisdom, and patterns found in the life of Jesus. He communicated the logos, or logic, of God in his teachings. He lived the logos, or pattern, of God in his life.” (12-13)

And that life, the Gospel of John asserts, begins like this:

*The Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

And here’s what that light shines - shining in the darkness of whatever patterns the world tries to assert, in all those competing, cacophonous logos:

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus says.
Not the bread of anxious toil, of rivalry, of working ourselves to the bone and pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps, all that runs by the logic of survival of the fittest but instead the logos of life-sustaining bread that comes so that all may flourish and be fed.

“I am the good shepherd,” Jesus says.
Not the choosy shepherd who rules by a logic of compliance, where one will be left behind if they do not conform, not even the one who wanders away from the fold, the one who does not stay in her allotted place, the one who beats to the sound of a different drum, but instead by the logos of a love unbounded and ever seeking after us.

“I am the light of the world,” Jesus says.
Not the light switched off and on depending on the causes and effects of this world, a meaningless machine that demands we get what we can when we can if we want to survive, a light hidden under a bushel or blown out by the haughtiness of our hot air but instead, a light unto our path that cannot be dimmed no matter what.

We’re three steps in on our journey. We began with awe and wonder, taking a stance of being surprised by the goodness that overflows. We came next to the choice to see one another as made in the image of God or not - to eat from the Tree of Life or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And now, we’re invited to follow.

With Jesus - the Logos, Word made flesh, Immanuel - God with us - with Jesus, it is always invitational. Even if you’ve made the choice to eat from the Tree of Life, there’s something you are called to do with it. And the Word made flesh does not force us to accept the invitation, does not force us into the way made clear by his life. Instead, we’re invited into a new kind of Logos, a freedom Logos where we come to understand this wild world we live in as “a universe that runs by the logic of creativity, goodness, and love.” (McLaren, 14)

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus says. “Blessed, broken, given to you. Take, eat.”
“I am the good shepherd,” Jesus says. “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.”

“I am the light of the world,” Jesus says. “Whoever follows me will never walk darkness but will have the light of life.”

We’re making this road by walking, right? Will we walk as close as we possibly can to Jesus, following near enough for the dust from his steps to cling to our feet? I imagine we will have days when our feet are so dirty, it would take more than a basin to wash them. And we’ll have days when our feet smell as fresh as soap. That’s the way it is with humans, with the choices we make and the patterns we follow. The Good News is - unlike the ways of the world - the Logos of Love ain’t fickle like us. It remains, since the beginning, and evermore shall be. Thanks be to God. Amen.