Our scripture this week comes from John 15:12-15. While you’re finding that, Little Johnny came to school and proudly announced to his teacher, “My family got a new house! The teacher replied, “How do you like it? Little Johnny said, “It's terrific! I have my own room, Little Billy has his, and little Jenny has hers! But poor Mama… poor, poor Mama…” The teacher was concerned, “What’s wrong with your poor Mama?” Johnny replied, “She still has to share a room with Daddy.” We all have sacrifices to make in life, don’t we?

**John 15:12-15 12This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. 14You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.**

Memorial Day started back in the late 1860’s as Decoration Day, to honor the fallen soldiers from the Civil War, both Union and Confederacy. The towns were decorated with flags and people came out to the graveyards to honor fallen soldiers. After more than 630,000 American soldiers died in the Civil War, there were very few families left untouched by the pain of losing a father, son, uncle, brother, grandson, or cousin. Gradually, Decoration Day became known as Memorial Day and expanded to honor all American soldiers who perished in any war. In 1971, President Nixon signed the bill declaring Memorial Day as a National Day of Remembrance for those who died in active military service.

In our scripture, Jesus declares – Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. Jesus laid down His life for us. He showed pure agape love that, while we were yet sinners, He died for us. He didn’t wait for me to “get my act together” or “show that I appreciated His love.” He died, knowing that people would continue to reject Him. He laid down His life knowing that some would tramp upon His sacrifice. Greater love has no man.

Jesus calls us His friends. How do we know that we are His friends, His followers? 1 John 5:2 says - By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. In verse 12 of our scripture, Jesus says - This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. How wonderful to be called the friend of Jesus?

Memorial Day gives us pause. We see, chiseled in stone all across this nation, the names of those who loved enough to charge hills, fall on grenades, and take beachheads, while bullets kicked sand against their boots. These soldiers loved family and friends and country so fiercely that they were willing to die.

A disciple – a follower of the Master – seeking to reflect Christ in all we do, must be ready to lay down life, just as Christ did. We probably won’t lay it down in a hail of gunfire or facing crucifixion for our beliefs. We’ll lay our life down in quieter ways. We’ll lay our life down to serve a sick spouse, a crippled child, a dying parent, or a drug addicted sibling. We’ll lay our life down to help a neighbor in need, teach and mentor a younger Christian, lead Sunday school, and serve our church. We’ll use vacation time to do missions trips. We’ll mow a young mother’s yard while she’s at work. We’ll pay the light bill of a struggling family without them knowing. In other words, we will lay self aside and love one another as Jesus calls us to do.

On this Memorial Day weekend, let’s take the time to praise God for those who died in active military service. Honor the fallen. Also, thank God for the disciples who died while being active in God’s army, reflecting the teachings of our Master. **A life laid down becomes a life well lived. There is no greater service. There is no greater love. As we prepare to study discipleship in the coming weeks, reflect on the life of Jesus, the example He gives. Based on the reflection of the Master we are, based on the mirror we are reflecting the Savior, if someone could only meet you, who might she believe Jesus is? As we answer this question, we have a better understanding of where we are as a disciple of Christ.**