***John 15:12-15 This 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.***

What a blessing this morning to baptize sisters in Christ. Aria and Madison, baptism symbolizes death of old self and rising to newness of life. Romans 6:4 reminds us - *therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* We are new creations, and we walk in that newness of life.

Our scripture this morning continues our look at who Jesus says we are. He asks us – Who do you say I Am? When we abide in Him, He knows who we are. Last week, we heard Him call us My Disciples. This week, we gladly hear another name – Friends.

Verse 12 says *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* John 13:34 Jesus gave us this commandment – This word has the idea of an authoritative prescription. Jesus is giving us a prescription. We choose to love one another. This is not an ooey, gooey emotion, complete with syrupy sweet tears. This is a choice, even when it’s hard. Love one another as Christ loved us. How did He love us? While we were yet still sinners, still acting as His enemy, still betraying Him as Judas. Loving like Jesus changes everything.

Verse 13 - *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.* What does this Greater Love look like? Romans 5:7-8 says - *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Christ chose to lay down His life while we were still in rebellion. Indeed, we choose to die to self when we are in Christ. We lay down our life – how? By choosing to love, choosing to serve, choosing to esteem others more highly than ourselves – not just in church! At home, at work, in the marketplace, on the road. We lay self down to serve in spirit. We abide, choose to dwell in Him and He dwells in us. The word friends at the end of this verse means dear ones. Jesus is telling us quite clearly – love others as dear ones to your soul… even those who don’t love us.

Verse 14 - *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.*You are my dear ones as you focus on Me and serve My people, as I have commanded. You are My dear ones, as you follow the prescription of loving one another as I have loved you. But, you must choose daily to take up your Cross and follow Me.

Verse 15 *No 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.* No longer do I call you servants – literally slaves. When one is a slave, a bondservant as this word means in the Greek, he or she serves in subjection. Service is a requirement, no option! The Master plans and the servant executes, without freedom of choice. But Jesus calls us friends… dear ones. Friends have freedom of choice. Friends choose obedience. Friends choose relationship. We choose to draw into a deeper understanding through Grace, a closer walk with Jesus. Intimacy with the Father, abiding within the Son, we learn of the secret things of God. Deuteronomy 29:29 says - *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.* By the Grace of God, through our intimacy with Jesus, the Holy Spirit abiding in us, and our obedient discipleship, we are called dear ones and God makes known the secret things. What a privilege to be included.

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the Resurrection, the Way, the Truth, the Life. Who does He say we are? My Disciples, when we abide. Friends, as we follow in obedience the authoritative prescription He has given us – Love one another as I have loved you. How are we doing following our Savior’s prescription? Let’s leave this place overjoyed – when we abide we are His disciples. When we love one another, we are His friends – His dear ones. This is who our Savior says we are.