John 15:9-17

Jesus had told the disciples that He is the vine and they are the branches and they need to abide in him to bear fruit. Our lesson today falls right on the heels of those words about the vine and the branches. Jesus, still talking about the fruits of the Christian life, puts a special emphasis on love. He says, "abide in my love" and "love one another as I have loved you." This is the essence of the fruits of abiding in Christ.

But what is this love. You know I love cheesecake! It tastes so good. Is that the kind of love he means? To some people in our world "love" is just a warm feeling or a rush of emotion. "Love is a many splendored thing." "Love is a warm puppy." "Love is a battlefield!?" To some love is merely romantic or even less.

The Ancient Greek uses four different words for love. One is *eros* from which we get the word erotic. Eros love is a self-serving love. Eros means I love you because you can give me something. Another of the Greek words for love is *phileo*. This is brotherly love. This love is loving those who a similar to you. A third is *storge*. This is Familial love. It is usually is used to describe the love of parents and children for each other. It can also mean to just put up with someone. Then there is *agape*. This is unconditional love. It is love for the sake of the other. What does Jesus mean by "love one another?"

Jesus offers us a definition in the passage. He says "No one has greater love than this to lay down one's life for one's friends." The context of these words are important. Jesus was in the upper room with his disciples. He had washed their feet and served them communion. Judas had just left to betray Jesus. These words of love were spoken in the shadow of the cross.

So the "one" that Jesus is talking about has to at least in part be an allusion to his own death. Jesus gave his life for us. This is love. In Romans Paul said, "Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that

proves God's love toward us."(Romans 5:8) Even though we are sinners and unworthy of his love, Jesus loved us anyway by dying on the cross.

This is surely unconditional love. This is the *agape* love that loves for the sake of other. Having said that, the definition "unconditional love" pales in comparison to what Jesus did. His death was a living example of the kind of love we should live. When Jesus said "Love one another" he meant sacrifice for one another.

Tomorrow is Memorial Day. On it we remember those who died in service to our nation. The people who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation and often the world. These are the men and women who have made that ultimate sacrifice for the freedom and security of America and ideally the world.

Now Christians may debate the efficacy and morality of war in general and any war in particular. But even if you are a pacifist or you believe America to be misled or mistaken to undertake a particular war, you still have to admit that the motivation of these men and women was to win freedom and security for the world. Their intention was to free people. So they gave their lives for their friends.

They are a living example of love.

Memorial Day weekend is the official beginning of summer. Many of you will be going to the beach or the lake or to cookouts. As you do, remember the example - the living definition of love given by those that this holiday honors. And when you think that Jesus calls us to love one another, this is what he meant.

But wait a minute. Very few of us we ever be placed in the situation of actually giving our lives for another. Is it impossible for us to love? No, we may never, I hope, be challenged to actually give our lives for another. But we can make little sacrifices. To place others first.

Jesus gave us another example of this love the upper room. He washed his disciple's feet. How low are you willing to stoop to help another? What sacrifices will you make? How will you abide in his love? The men and women we honor this weekend gave their lives. What about you?