**Great Love**

 ***12****“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.****13****Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.****14****You are my friends if you do what I command you.****15****No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.****16****You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.****17****These things I command you, so that you will love one another. (John 15:12-17, ESV)*

 The greatest love that we can have is to be selfless givers towards God and each other. Greetings dearly beloved in the name of Jesus Christ, who showed the greatest love of all, offering himself up for our salvation. Today we’re going to talk about this kind of love because many need to hear and to devote themselves to our Savior’s commandment again, which is to live a life full of selfless love.

Indeed, love itself has many meanings, especially in the Biblical Greek, the original language of the New Testament. There are four kinds of love. First is *agape*, which is Divine, selfless, unconditional love. Second is *phileo*, which is the verb depicting friendly, brotherly love, at times emotional, but also very much the type of love between friends. This term was beginning to be used interchangeably with *agape* in that day’s Greek speech. The third type used in the New Testament is *storge*, which speaks about the love between family members, for example between Noah and his family members, or Ruth and Naomi in their account, or love between parents and their children. Finally, *eros* is also used to speak about love, which has more to do with romantic and even sexual love. In some churches, this particular love became an issue for them in the New Testament era, as the Scriptures were being written. Today, then, we’re talking about “*agape*” love. Again, the greatest love we can ever have is to be selflessly giving towards God and each other. Let’s talk, then, about this important quality, especially since today we commemorate those soldiers of our United States of America who sacrificed themselves (died) in their service.

Jesus invites us to be selfless people of love. From the very beginning God has been selfless. He has revealed his power, his identity, all of it to us, if we only have the ears to hear, the eyes to see and the heart to understand recognize him. God through his prophets devoted entire centuries so that his people would have his true word and direction. God sent his Son, the Messiah, and sacrificed him so that the people would have the life of salvation. God sent his Spirit so that people would not be left alone in this world against the devil, even though our heavenly Father rules very comfortably from the heavenly realm. God loved us continually. Ceaselessly, our Father God showed us his *agape* love. It was an unconditional, patient, wise and selfless love expressed through Jesus Christ. No one can say that God was self-centered, selfish, or in any way stingy or indifferent toward his creation. On the contrary, may his works be an example to us.

Just thinking about it all, what need was there for Jesus to be sacrificed if his apostles could have had a comfortable life with their fishing, their businesses, their tax-collecting, or other occupations? Why should *we* make ourselves uncomfortable to spread the Good News of Jesus if today’s people are going to get upset at us and create difficulties for us? Why did the heroes of the Christian church, be they the Apostles, the other preachers of Scripture throughout church history and our Armenian Evangelical preachers in the 1800s have to go through all the suffering that they did? In fact, we see that the magnitude of their suffering and persecution caused their love for worshipping God and making his Word central in their lives to show.

Today, we as the people of love, the Jesus people, are called to be selfless, sacrificially loving people. Perhaps your price for loving selflessly is not physical death, but to spend more time with those who cannot care for themselves, those who are weak physically or emotionally, or those who are sick. Perhaps your sacrifice of love is to join an APC ministry and to glorify God in that way. Maybe your service is of a financial nature, or an uncomfortable sacrifice of time and talents. Or perhaps your sacrifice of love is to bring those who cannot come to worship physically yourself (picking them up). There are many ways to love, and for that reason I always invite you all to be here physically, because it is not possible to obey the commandment to love each other if we do not have a target or goal.

Jesus is inviting each of us to be the selfless people of love. The greatest love that you can have is to be selfless towards God and each other. May the Lord teach us to love. The Lord bless you all. Amen.