Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Perhaps some of us have heard of National Get Over it Day. It is a new commemoration -- celebrated on March 9 – a date halfway between Valentine’s Day and April Fools Day. It was created by Jeff Goldblatt, an Atlanta entrepreneur who couldn’t get over the breakup of a relationship. It has become a day for us to reflect upon whatever grudges, resentment, worries or negativity bind us and to “get over them”[[1]](#endnote-1) so that we can move through the world unbound and free, as I imagine that Lazarus did after he was brought to life again, no longer concerned with the negativity of the world, but instead concerned with the things of Jesus.

Jesus’s words raised Lazarus from the dead to enable him to begin life anew. Yet, as Lazarus begins his new life Jesus instructs Lazarus’s friends – those in the community around him -- to continue that healing by helping with the unbinding. In Lazarus’s case, this was a physical unbinding, removing the grave clothes from his feet, hands and face so that he could walk freely and embrace Jesus, his sisters and his friends, again.

We typically think of the story of Lazarus as being about resurrection after we die – about us being assured that we will have life anew because of Jesus and with Jesus and all the saints of heaven for all of eternity. And that’s all true and this story does speak to that. But this story also speaks to us about how Jesus can raise us out of whatever tomb has imprisoned us in this life – the tomb of addiction, the tomb of resentment, the tomb of estrangement from our friends or relatives, the tomb of anger, the tomb of feeling sorry for ourselves, the tomb of having to compete with our neighbor, whatever has buried us, whatever has taken the joy out of life and relationships. Then once Jesus has raised us out of that tomb, Jesus commands us all – as the community of saints—to help continue that healing for each other, to help each other continue to let go of whatever binds us so that we can live as ordinary people made holy and whole through the voice of Jesus.

Communities of like-minded people are key to helping us to be rid of those things that bind us and to stay free of them forever. AA, NA and Weight Watchers, for example, work because they are a close-knit group of people with a similar challenge who support each other and hold each other accountable. Of course, people do become and stay sober on their own and people do lose weight on their own. But studies show that people who participate in these communities have a much higher success rate than those who go it alone.

The same is true with living the Christian life. We can worship God in many places by ourselves. I hope we do that. But participating actively in a Christian community makes discipleship easier. The Christian community – the community of saints (and that means all us gathered here – the community of the baptized) – helps us to stay unbound from those things that detract from our being able to fully embrace Jesus and our fellow human beings. We help each other by letting each other talk without judgment, by sharing our joys in the Lord, by encouraging and helping each other forgive each other, by reaching out to those in our community who are not here.

Today is All Saints Sunday. We celebrate the lives of the saints who have gone before us into heaven. They have been important in bearing God to us and they feast at the Lord’s Table in heaven simultaneously as we feast at the Lord’s Table on earth. One day, we will join them. But All Saints Sunday is also about the community of living saints.

Henry Barclay Swete, an English Biblical scholar, wrote “Those who have died in faith form the great majority of the members of Christ, and they naturally rise to our minds when we think of the communion of saints, and take the largest place in the conception. But the members of the Church who are still on earth are included, and it is their privilege to share in the fellowship of the Body of Christ.”[[2]](#endnote-2)

As saints still on earth, we are called to remain active in our church community. Within that community we are called to love each other, to hold each other accountable and to encourage each other in our Christian journey. We are called to work with Jesus and each other to complete the work Jesus started within us when we died to self and rose again in the waters of baptism. We are called to unbind each other and let ourselves go free to embrace Jesus and our fellow men and women.

1. https://www.care2.com/greenliving/5-ways-to-embrace-national-get-over-it-day.html [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Synthesis,. A Weekly Resource for Preaching and Worship in the Episcopal Tradition, PNMSI Publishing Co., Inc**.,** November 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)