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“A New Dimension” By Rev. Jeffrey V. O’Grady, SMCC Pastor

One cold January afternoon in 2009, US Airways Flight 1549, out of New York’s La Guardia Airport, headed for Charlotte, North Carolina, made an emergency landing in the waters of the Hudson River. You may remember the event, (or possibly saw the movie with Tom Hanks in the leading role). After losing power from a bird strike, the quick thinking pilot, Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger, ensured the survival of everyone on board making him an instant hero.

You likely don’t remember Ric Elias on that flight in 2009. Elias was sitting in seat 1-D. He was the only one able to see and talk to the flight attendants. He said after the pilot turned off the engines, the silent plane eerily glided barely over the George Washington Bridge, toward the Hudson River. At this moment Elias’ mind was filled with thoughts about life, his work, and his family. Elias said he learned three things the day he thought he was going to die. 1) It all changes in an instant. Do not postpone living but to daily embrace it. Don’t put off what is most important. 2) He regretted giving priority to things that don’t matter over people who do. His marriage is all the better for learning that lesson. He has tried to eliminate negative energy in his life as a result. 3) What was most important to him was seeing his kids grow up and being the best father he could be. In his TED Talk, Elias said that he was given the gift of two miracles that day: Not dying and the miracle of seeing into the future, being able to come back and live differently. How might you live differently, if given a second chance?

Easter provides us with the ability to come back and live differently, because we too learn that it can all change in an instant – and it has all changed in an instant on Easter. It requires that we reframe the way we look at life, like Ric Elias did.

The early Church was beginning to realize that God was reframing the whole world, changing everything through the power of Easter. They were given back the ability to live their lives differently. It meant they were part of an expanding community of people discovering that Jesus Christ is Lord of all – and that the old distinctions no longer mattered. One’s nationality, one’s ethnicity, one’s religious background -- none of it mattered as much because a new identity in Christ mattered most.

Jesus was turning the world upside down, not interested in land or possessions as much as in life itself. It was not political freedom that was at issue but finding freedom within where if we are imprisoned it is by our own choosing. This was a transformation to capture the hearts and imaginations of those who would believe. This was an invitation to a whole new dimension. And today we continue to discover that new dimension, to discover what took place in those days, realizing it has everything to do with how we live now.

Following Christ means living out faith in economic, political, civic, and relational ways that go beyond national interests and transcend preconceived ideas. Our very concepts of power and strength and freedom are understood differently. We discover love by becoming loving. We can see others as children of the same God. We no longer find ourselves waiting for others to reach out to us, but instead can become part of the outreach of God’s love. We can live differently because we’ve had a chance to see into the future, to come back with a different set of priorities. Discover how Easter can change everything.