

# See for yourself

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome. Yeah, there we are.

My name's Dave. Welcome if you're visiting this morning. There goes my notes. Could I get someone to turn that fan off? That'd be great. Well, back in 2017, my wife Emma and I had the privilege of going to see for ourselves parts of Europe.

And what I thought would be the best thing when we were setting off didn't turn out to be my favourite thing. We'll come to this one later.

I thought my favourite thing was going to be Liverpool. I bought tickets and it was the highlight of our itinerary.

We got to see firsthand Mo Salah. I'm going to use my right foot. He's left footed. I'm sure this really matters for the sermon. But he half volleyed into the back of the net just before my eyes.

[ 1 : 08 ] And I just wanted to jump. I wanted to cheer. But I feared for my life because I was in the opponent's seating area. But it was amazing.

We didn't know where we were staying that night. We had somewhere booked. But we're going to be really late into our hotel room. And Emma was worried about whether we get in or not. I didn't care.

We got to see Liverpool. Like, why are you worrying about that, Emma? Like, we saw Liverpool. Anyway, I thought that was going to be the highlight. It wasn't. As you can tell, it was up there.

But we saw some amazing things. Like, we saw the classics like Eiffel Tower. We saw Venice. Saw Michelangelo's statue of David.

We saw, what else did we see? Saw the Colosseum. Saw all these amazing things. None of them were my highlight. None of them came even close to my highlight and my favourite thing.

[ 2 : 12 ] I was watching Grand Designs the other night. If you come to this church, I've used Grand Designs as an illustration, so you know what I've been watching lately.

But this episode was about a guy called Brahm and his wife. And they, on the Isle of Wight, they built this massive, massive modern home for their family.

They spared no expense. They set a record for Grand Designs for money spent, which is saying something like three million pounds. I don't know what that is in our currency.

They spared no expense. Like, for his young family, he wanted huge rooms for his two children, along with the games room and everything else that you could imagine.

Now, what motivated them was that a few years earlier, Brahm had a brain hemorrhage and he spent 11 days in a coma.

[ 3 : 12 ] And then months and months, you could imagine recovering. And so he just wanted to seize life after that. He wanted the perfect family home for peace, overlooking the ocean for his family.

He can understand that. And they said it multiple times when they were talking through that there might not be a tomorrow. He might not be here tomorrow. You can understand that motivation, can't you?

The sad thing by the end of the episode was that Brahm, he couldn't enjoy the house because he took out 11 different loans to pay for this thing.

Like, one of them was 540,000 high interest loan, as well as other bank loans, loans from his friends, from his family.

And he even got a loan from a supermarket chain. I don't even know how you go about doing that. But he couldn't enjoy it. Like, the host asked them, was it all worth it, how much you spent?

[ 4 : 23 ] The wife was just like, yes. I'm not sure I believed her. But his face, he's just loaded with debt. He couldn't even enjoy it.

I think we're all a bit like Brahm. I think we are going all in on something. Brahm put his faith in this house, this perfect family home, to give him life and peace. But it didn't deliver in the end. But I think we're all like that. It may not be a house that you go all in on. But I think we all go all in. We put our faith in something or someone to give us that peace and life. I don't know why you're here today.

If you've come to church for the first time in a long time, I'm guessing that whatever you're putting faith in, whatever you're going all in on, isn't going so well.

[ 5 : 26 ] We're going to hear a bit of the Bible now from John's Gospel. And I just want you to imagine and hear a different kind of house, a different kind of family home that Jesus offers.

John 14, 1 to 7. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you myself. That where I am, you may be also.

And you know the way to where I'm going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know where you're going.

[ 6 : 30 ] How can we know? The way. Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

Jesus' promises, they're unique. Like all other religious leaders, they point and they say, here's the way to God.

Here it is. That's the way. Here's what you need to do to get there. But here's a guy who's saying, I'm the way.

His claims are unique. His promises are unique. He says he can guarantee our tomorrow. He's saying, and the day after, and the day after that, into forever.

[ 7 : 41 ] He's saying that we can have a place in God's family, in God's family home. Huge promises. He's unique.

And he's saying that there's no back door. He says, I am the only way. So Thomas at this point, he knows that Jesus has to go somewhere and prepare a place for him in God's family home.

But he wasn't ready for what Jesus meant. He wasn't expecting it. He wasn't ready for it. It caused Thomas severe doubt because that very night after speaking these words and the next day, he's betrayed by a close friend.

He's arrested. He goes to a courtroom where it is totally rigged and they sentence him to death.

He's beaten and he's just weak and mocked and publicly ridiculed and then he's nailed to a cross until he suffocates.

We're just going to read the end of Jesus' death just to get a feel for why Thomas doubted Jesus.

[ 8 : 58 ] John 19, 31 to 35. Since it was a day of preparation and so that bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath for that Sabbath was a high day, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once there came out blood and water.

He who saw it has borne witness.

His testimony is true and he knows he is telling the truth that you also may believe. Well, Jesus was cold, pale, lifeless, dead and his promises with him.

[ 10 : 30 ] The words that he spoke, I am the way, the truth and the life, they just seem empty.

There's a solid line we all understand, isn't there?

It's universally understood that the death of the body is the end. That's it. Game over. Thomas had gone all in on Jesus.

Like, Bram had gone all in on that house, Thomas had gone all in on Jesus and it just seems that darkness, evil, death had won again.

Now, they spent three dark days in that space but then Thomas hears amazing news and he finds it unbelievable.

He can't believe it so let's hear that now. John 20, 1 to 25. Now, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

[ 11 : 46 ] So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved and said to them, they've taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they've laid him.

So Peter went out with the other disciple and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first and stooping to look in he saw the linen cloths lying there but he didn't go in and Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb.

He saw the linen cloths lying there and the face cloth which had been on Jesus' head not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in and he saw and believed for as yet they didn't understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead.

Then the disciples went back to their homes but Mary stood weeping outside the tomb and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain one at the head and one at the feet.

[ 13 : 20 ] They said to her woman why are you weeping? She said to them they've taken away my lord and I don't know where they've laid him.

Having said this she turned around and saw Jesus standing but she didn't know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her woman why are you weeping?

Whom are you seeking? supposing him to be the gardener she said to him sir if you've carried him away tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away.

Jesus said to her Mary she turned and said to him in Aramaic which means teacher.

Jesus said to her do not cling to me or I have not yet ascended to the father but go to my brothers and say to them I'm ascending to my father and your father to my God and your God Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples I have seen the Lord and that he said these things to her on the evening of that day the first day of the week the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews Jesus came and stood among them and said to them peace be with you when he had said this he showed them his hands and his side then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord Jesus said to them again peace peace be with you as the father has sent me even so am

[ 15 : 19 ] I sending you and when he had said this he breathed on them and said to them receive the Holy Spirit if you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven them if you withhold forgiveness from any it is withheld now Thomas one of the twelve called the twin was not with them when Jesus came so the other disciples told him we have seen the Lord but he said to them unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side I will never believe well Thomas I think we've been a bit unfair to Thomas he's been given the nickname doubting Thomas I think we should give him the nickname rational and reasonable

Thomas he's heard Mary and Peter and John say that they've gone to the tomb and it's empty that his grave clothes are just lying there in a neat pile he's heard Mary say I have seen the Lord he's heard his ten friends who he would trust say we have seen the Lord none of these people were expecting this and Thomas who's even inclined to believe it's too unbelievable so he speaks I think he speaks for all of us in our skepticism it's just too unbelievable but I think that puts us in a dilemma because if Jesus is unique unique if what he promises you is unique if what he came to do was unique then you'd want him to do something that you've never heard of in the history of the world and it's never happened so if

I can put it this way unless Jesus does something unbelievable he wouldn't be worth listening to because what he's offering and who he claims to be is so unique so we're going to have one final reading and here's what Thomas saw for himself now John 20 26 to 31 eight days later his disciples were inside again and Thomas was with them although the doors were locked Jesus came and stood among them and said peace be with you then he said to Thomas put your finger here see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side do not disbelieve but believe

Thomas answered him my Lord and my God Jesus said to him have you believed because you have seen me blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book but these are written

so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name imagine let's go back to Brahm imagine if Brahm's beautiful expensive house with his ridiculously expensive front door someone knocks on the front door one day and he's invited in and they sit down at the dining room table he opens his laptop and this guy just starts transferring money 540 grand paid all his 11 ridiculous lines just to his friends paid to his family paid just all of them this guy just and he's not using it to blackmail him it is just pure gift and how would you feel if you were

Brahm like who are you why are you doing this when Thomas saw Jesus for himself I'm guessing it must have just been a very overwhelming experience I doubt he could probably put it into words what he intuitively knew straight away he must have known intuitively darkness and evil and death did not win you were stronger you were stronger and if that's the case you went to the cross on purpose to pay my debt and so his famous words my Lord and my God I want to show you my favourite thing from my

[ 21 : 22 ] Europe trip here it is it's tiny it's like I don't know it's less than 10 centimetres and we were running so late trying to find a park we only got 10 minutes to see this thing but it was tiny we squeezed it into our itinerary but it's my favourite thing because this is I think it's still the earliest fragment of the New Testament and it's dated so close to the original time it's called P52 Papyrus 52 Clay I think this is your slideshow I didn't ask you for permission I'm assuming it's okay it's from John's Gospel what we're reading here now well we haven't read the exact bit it's from when Pilate the Roman governor is sentencing Jesus to death even though he's finding him innocent it's hard to put into words why it's my favourite thing

I think it's my favourite thing because I can't touch Jesus myself I can't see him I can't touch his scars but it means what I'm reading here I can rely on what I'm reading on what they have recorded for us it means that through them when Mary says I saw the Lord I've seen the Lord when the ten other disciples say we have seen the Lord when Thomas says my Lord and my God it means through them I can see the Lord myself through their testimony it means that it means for me that the resurrection is is just solid ground it is he is the stronghold of my life he is my light and my salvation it means my debt for what

I've racked up towards my friends and family and God paid paid paid it means my tomorrow is sure like he promises just as much as he bodily was raised I will be in a world that is raised and made new my tomorrow is sure it means that whatever darkness comes he is stronger it means he's experienced any pain I go through and way more first hand because of his scars he knows it and he's my friend I know he hears my prayers he hears my cries he he's present I know he's present because he's alive and I know that when he promises that

I've got a place in God's family home forever he's already done everything to bring me into that it's guaranteed so that little fragment it just helps me know that when I go all in on Jesus because he's risen from the dead it's hard to put into words it's everything so I don't know whenever you doubt God's forgiveness Jesus is inviting you to come and look at his scars come and see for yourself in the words of scripture recorded for us as we learn about him together in church come and see for yourself whenever you doubt whether you have a real place in God's family in God's household come and see whenever you doubt whether he's stronger than the darkness you're facing right now come and see come and see for yourself so

I don't know what's brought you here today if you keep looking for life and peace in things you can see with your eyes like a physical house I don't know Brahm didn't find it I haven't found it I don't think we can find it but Jesus gives it to us he's where life and peace really is found but don't take my word for it who cares if you go to Europe or not who cares if you see the Eiffel Tower so touristy anyway who cares what really matters is whether you experience Jesus for yourself and John's Gospel says Jesus is inviting come and see come and see for yourself well happy Easter and may [ 26 : 52 ] God give you life life and peace thanks for listening