

“Seeing through Christ” 2 Co 5:14-21

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Today we will speak about something that will require you to focus and to follow carefully, but we need to speak about this, as we don't live in a Christian country anymore and we need to learn to understand why other people have so different and, in our view, so strange ideas.

How many of you have glasses? Most of us have. We can appreciate how important and how enjoyable it is to have good glasses that help us to see clearly. But even those who don't need to wear glasses can easily imagine how it is when you put on wrong glasses.

Too strong, for example, you can still see through them, but what you see is unclear and distorted. Or you can imagine different color sun glasses. Again, as soon as you put them on your eyes, they change everything that you see.

Why to bring up this experience with glasses? Because we all, all human beings have what we could call certain glasses through which we see this world. These are not physical glasses, they are made of our believes, convictions, our understanding about this world, about what we believe to be true.

Technical term used to describe these our “glasses” is worldview – how we perceive, how we view this world. This helps us to understand why different cultures and different societies are so different, and also why different people around us see things so differently.

Let's look at a few examples to see how it works. And remember this simple truth. We don't look at our “glasses”, we look through them. We see everything through our “glasses”, and most often people are not even aware of their own worldviews, or their “glasses”.

For example, Hindu religion. One of their fundamental teachings is that this world is only an illusion. The real world is the spiritual world. And when you think about it, it kind of makes sense. For in this world everything changes.

Day and night, day and night... autumn, winter, spring, summer, autumn, winter... etc. We change. We are born, grow up and die. Others are born, grow up and die. It is not that difficult to believe that this world really is only an everchanging illusion, and the real reality is the spiritual one.

But it also means that these “glasses” will determine how you live and how you relate to others. If this world doesn’t matter, then why care about it? If this life doesn’t matter, why care about other people? It simply doesn’t make sense.

Buddhism, for example, teaches that the root of all sufferings is our attachment to different things. To free ourselves from suffering of this life we need to detach ourselves from everything that could hurt us. It makes sense, doesn’t it?

You desire something and don’t get it, and these cravings poison your life. You attach yourselves to something or someone, and then you are afraid to lose it. And what if you do lose it, – your job, house, loved ones, how would you feel?

Sufferings... When you see the world through these “glasses” it will shape your perception and your attitude. You will try to avoid attachments. And what is the greatest attachment? Something that is often seen as the highest value in our culture. Love, that’s right.

And how much head and heart aches can love cause?! You now it... a lot. Thus, Buddhism teaches that love can be the greatest ... what we would call sin. For it can cause the greatest sufferings. Let us not love!

Let’s examine “glasses” that are widespread in the West. Evolutionary and materialistic thinking. Only thing that exists is matter. Everything came from nothing without any reason, and everything exists without any purpose, and the history is guided by the ongoing competition where only the fittest survive.

Why not? It is kind of true that we can know for sure only what we can touch, and smell and weight and measure and observe. If these are your “glasses”, then they will determine how you see the world, how you see human beings.

Then we can’t have intrinsic value, not more than cats or fish. Or any rights at that. Why would you then care for the weak and the poor and the stranger? It makes perfect sense to think only about yourself and to use everything and everyone for your benefit.

And, of course, every “glasses” that do not reveal this world as it truly is, they distort our perception and make it illogical. If this world is only an illusion, why to cling to it, and why to desire its pleasures? But people do.

If the attachment is the root of all sufferings, why do we all long to love and to be loved? If material world is all that there is for the fittest to survive, why do all people look for meaning and purpose in their lives and are quite passionate when injustice is done to them?

These distorted “glasses” can’t answer these questions. We can see that they are not only innocent different perspectives, which we can pick and choose as we please, as people often do these days, they are lies that bear its bitter and destructive fruits in lives of those who have believe them.

This whole thing about different worldviews, or as described them as “glasses” is real and it shapes our lives. Whatever “glasses” you have, that will determine how you see the world, how you understand and interpret the world, how you lead your live and how you relate to others. It is necessary for us to be aware that this is the reason why people and cultures are so different.

Now, what about us? Those of us who grew up in Christian families, which is – most of us, would have mostly experienced Christian “glasses”, however even Christians are more and more influenced by what our society believes to be true.

And we are much more likely to be influenced by false and harmful ideas around us, if we are not clear and conscious about what our own “glasses” are. Our today’s reading from Paul’s 2nd letter to Corinthians is very helpful for us.

It serves as great starting point reflecting on how we should see the world, ourselves and everyone else. Paul’s and the Bible’s answer is – through Christ. We should see this world through Christ Jesus.

Our “glasses” should be shaped by Jesus Christ, who comes to us through the Word. What does this mean? This is how we could explain our “glasses”, telling God’s story to others.

Everything that exists was created and is still held together by benevolent Creator. He created everything that exists, not because He had to, but out of sheer goodness and mercy, as manifestation of His deepest nature, that is – love.

The pinnacle of His creation was humanity, His little human creatures, us, whom He created in His Image and likeness, to be His representatives over His creation, and to care for it the same way our God Himself cares for us.

However, our first parents turned away from their Creator. They were deceived not to trust Him, but instead to crave to become like gods themselves. The rejection of our Creator drove the wedge in our relationship.

Their ever-growing self-centeredness alienated them from their loving Creator further and further. We would never be able to find our way back. We would never even consider looking for our God, not to mention asking for forgiveness.

It was Him, our God, who has revealed Himself as one God and three persons, who came looking for us, for each one of us. Even if we rejected and ignored Him, He would never forget or abandon us. In the very beginning He gave His promise, that He will restore the relationships that our rebellion, ignorance, and arrogance had broken. He kept His promise. He always does.

In the fullness of time, the holy and eternal Son of God, through whom everything was created, and for whom everything was created, who had spoken with our first parents in the garden of Eden, who had promised to restore what was lost ... He came as one of us.

As Jesus from Nazareth. It was God's work. The Triune God made the first step. He came to restore relationships that we had broken. He came to reconcile us to Himself. He did it. He removed all the obstacles.

Where there are foolish or evil actions, there are inevitable consequences, we see it, where there is crime, there must punishment, where there is sin, there must follow judgment. Otherwise justice and order will never exist.

What did our loving God do? He took all the responsibility for all our foolish and evil actions, He took all punishment for all our crimes, He voluntarily received judgment for all our sins. Jesus did it. In exchange offering us forgiveness and eternal life with Him.

He did this not because we asked for it, or deserved it, but because He loves His creation and His little creatures, us, and He longs to see us restored and well, rejoicing and flourishing in His presence, not suffering and withering under the burdens of this sinful and broken world.

Now He comes to us, He speaks to us, and as He speaks to us, He sends His life-creating Spirit into our hearts. His Spirit makes us into new creation. Once you have received the Spirit of God, you are united with Jesus Christ, His eternal Son, and once you are united with Him, death will have no power over you. As Christ was raised from the dead in the power of the Holy Spirit, in new resurrected body, so will be all of you, who have God's Spirit in you.

Then the almighty and benevolent Creator will restore the goodness of His entire creation, there will be no more death, no pain, no suffering, no crying. We will dwell in His presence and we will rejoice seeing Him as He is.

In Jesus Christ true God has revealed to us the truth about Himself, about this world and about us. Through Jesus we see the loving Father, we see God who was willing to sacrifice His life so that only He could rescue us from death, from eternal death. These are our Christian "glasses".

This is how we see the world. Through Christ. And these "glasses" determine how we live and how we relate to others. We have this beautiful, meaningful and filled with joyful hope view on reality, and that shapes how we see others.

We don't see this world as illusion, but as very good creation of our God. We don't see love as the root of all sufferings, we know that our God is love, that He loves us and His love enables us to love others even if they reject us.

We don't see people only with our eyes of flesh, we see them as Jesus sees them. We see no one as our enemy. We don't fight for our survival, we fight in

prayer for the salvation of everyone. For we see everyone through Christ. We see everyone as created in God's image and likeness. Infinitely precious to Him.

Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself so that He could bring back everyone into the loving fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And this is why He sends us into the world. To be ambassadors of the Triune God Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Sent to bring everyone this life-giving and life-changing message.

That God has in Jesus Christ removed everything that separated us from His love. He calls us back. He wants us with Him. Our Father doesn't rejoice if the wicked or the unbelieving perish, but if they turn back to Him and receive His gifts of forgiveness and eternal life.

And whoever receive us and our message, they receive Jesus, and they receive the Father, and the Holy Spirit dwells with them and they are made a new creation. Then they belong to the age to come, and their future is safe in the hands of their loving Father.

This is why we are here. This is why we pray for the unbelieving world. The love that we have received and keep receiving from Jesus empowers us to love others, and sends us out to seek the lost. This is why we want everyone to have these God's given "glasses" that help us to see the truth that is more beautiful than we could ever have dreamed.

I pray that we can be conscious and grateful about our God given "glasses". I pray that we would be keen and gentle helping other to change their "glasses". I pray that those loved ones whom we now see in flesh, we would see one day as a new creation rejoicing and praising our God for all His goodness to us.

May our gracious God make it happen. Amen.