

9 Lessons and Carols Message 2019 @ Aalst

⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

John 1	Johannes 1
⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.	⁵ Het licht schijnt in de duisternis en de duisternis heeft het niet in zijn macht kunnen krijgen.
⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.	⁹ het echte licht, dat in de wereld kwam om iedereen te verlichten. ¹⁰ Het Woord kwam in de wereld en heeft de wereld gemaakt, maar de wereld wilde niets van het Woord weten.

We have a strange relationship with light. In this month of December we may wonder where the light has gone?

On the one hand, light is so welcome and we celebrate it in many ways.

- We expect transparency in our dealings.
- We use lots of glass in our buildings to let daylight in.
- We enjoy the cosiness of candles and we play with artificial light in *Glow Eindhoven* and *Lichtjesroutes*.

Yet on the other hand, some part of us may like to have some darkness as well to hide things we don't want everyone to see. We all have secrets. Who is really a totally open book?

One moment of full light can change everything. I have stood in dark places away from city lights during electrical storms in which the short flash of lightening made me aware of everything around me all at once. This is a simple example of 'Enlightenment' / *Verlichting* insight that changes how you think and how you live.

It's transforming revelation. Considering both Buddha and the French Enlightenment this is how both religious and non-religious people consider the experience of darkness being lifted. It creates a new place, invites a new mind and brings new freedoms and possibilities.

Enlightenment comes when something representing light invades the darkness and breaks whatever power the darkness has. That is how the story of Jesus is told in

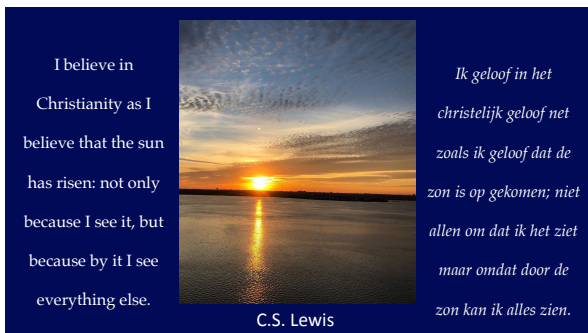
John's Gospel. He is the True Light coming into the darkness and it's an active battle, a contest with darkness resisting and pushing back to the point of death on a cross. This is how it works.

This year Brabant celebrated memories of this in the 75th anniversary of the *bevrijding* or Liberation. September 1944 was the moment of break-through where the darkness of occupation and all that it brought was lifted. The local experience was that the darkness fought back with a brutal counter attack.

Then as part of Europe this year we also marked 30 years since the Berlin Wall was broken and the darkness of Communism was pushed away in Europe. With Communism gone a new era was hoped for but we all know that aspects of the old darkness are pushing back from both the right and the left.

Light shines and the darkness resists.

This carol service tonight is inspired by a tradition that was polished at Cambridge University in England but I want to quote a famous Oxford Professor: C.S. Lewis, who said something helpful about the value of true light:



**I believe in Christianity as I believe
that the sun has risen: not only
because I see it, but because by it I
see everything else.**

In reference to Jesus as 'the Light come into the world', he was saying that receiving Jesus not only enables us to see him and enjoy him but to see everything else in his light as well.

Jesus is widely recognized as impressive in himself and well worth looking at, but when Jesus is received for who he claims to be he opens our eyes to see and perceive reality in a whole new way. He is 'the true light' who gives light to all who receive him.

Meanwhile there is a false light which draws people to it self but somehow covers everything else. It's like the contemporary 'fake news' drawing attention but giving more trouble than worth.

False light or 'untrue light' is:

- the power we accept that makes us powerless.
- the music that makes us deaf to everything else
- the drink that relaxes but makes us senseless
- the information that makes us none the wiser

In contrast people who embrace the true light can also see all this darkness and false light.

People who reject the true light see whatever they embrace and nothing more.

It's an empty disappointing experience.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus we celebrate you as the Light of the World.

You are the redeeming illumination sent in God's love to be light for us who seek true light by which to see.

Shine anew in our hearts and minds that we may see truly and walk wisely.

Amen.