

## The power of gentleness

Beloved person,

At this time of year (in the Netherlands), when we have to turn on the lights a little earlier, the days grow shorter, and Christmas is approaching, we long for a little more gentleness. Christmas stirs something within us.

Yet that is also exactly what makes Christmas so special. It invites us to look beyond each other's idiosyncrasies, to find warmth where it once seemed cold. To experience a sense of connection with others in this way.

In the Christmas story of the little hedgehog, we see that again.<sup>1</sup> He wants nothing more than to join in, to belong, but his spines keep others at a distance. And that hurts. Until the other animals decide to stop looking at what cannot be done and instead focus on what can be done. They find ways to gently get closer, with care, with love. And gradually, friendship begins to grow.

*We all sometimes encounter something that pricks us,  
something that sometimes creates distance.  
But those who look and listen with gentleness,  
notice that warmth always prevails.*

*Because sometimes it seems dark around us,  
cold and quiet, without any support.  
A kind gesture can then touch us deeply,  
and it can make a world of difference.*

*So let us choose gentleness,  
love, and attention for many,  
for true Christmas is not in what we receive,  
but in the warmth we share.*

That's exactly what Christmas is about. Not about decorations, lights, or gifts, but about the light we can spark in each other when we choose gentleness and kindness. Take a look around you. Who in your surroundings do you suspect might be feeling a bit like that hedgehog? Who do you think is struggling to fit in? Who seems strong but might secretly want to experience a sign of warmth?

Christmas invites us to not look away but to see. To dare to say: 'You are welcome. With everything that you are.' Because the world doesn't change through great deeds, but through small, sincere gestures: a smile, a listening ear, a hand on a shoulder.

*Let us consciously choose gentleness.  
For words that heal rather than break.  
For deeds that connect rather than divide.*

Send that message. Call that one person. Share something of yourself. Because every time we spread a little warmth, a bit of cold disappears. Could this be the true meaning of Christmas?

We wish you all a wonderful, warm Christmas!

*brother Robert Schokker and sister Danielle Bijmolt*



<sup>1</sup> Inspiration for this weekly letter: Erste Christmas AD2018: What would Christmas be without love?