

“Christmas Around the World: Greenland”

Isaiah 9:2

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All Scripture quoted from ESV unless otherwise noted

There are many different traditions in various parts of the country and around the world. It is the desire of the Christian and Missionary Alliance to share all of Jesus with all of the world. Maybe we can learn to understand and appreciate those who are in the world a little more by understanding how they are celebrating Christmas in the same or in different ways than those ways in which we are celebrating it. Today we'll learn about Greenland, our neighbor to the north and east

Christmas in Greenland is always a white Christmas – every single year. The long winter nights afford a great opportunity to observe the Northern Lights. Christmas trees have to be imported and are lit the first Sunday of advent, but not decorated until 12/23. Typical decorations include candles, ornaments, handcrafted items, and small flags from Greenland or Denmark. The placing of a red-orange illuminated star in windows is a traditional and very popular decoration. Nearly every village puts up a tree (which has been imported from Europe) on a hillside outside the village and most people gather and sing carols the first time it is lit

There are some strange foods in Greenland at Christmastime include Mattak – whale skin with strips of blubber inside and Kiviak – Raw flesh of auks (an arctic bird) which have been buried whole in sealskin for several months until they have reached an advanced stage of decomposition! You might also get to enjoy barbequed caribou, lamb, or deer and some popular desserts such as berries or apples with a crisp topping and lots of pastries and cookies.

Most people attend a church service on Christmas Eve, many in traditional Greenlandic attire. Then on Christmas Eve night, the men serve the women food and coffee, then families gather and play board games after the evening meal. Many people light candles and place them in cemeteries, to remember family and friends. They do this in certain other Nordic countries, such as Finland, as well. Also, sometimes children go caroling from house to house and are given small treats or gifts.

Gifts are exchanged on 12/24, as Christmas is basically celebrated on Christmas Eve rather than on Christmas Day. Traditional presents are model sledges, a pairs of polished walrus tusks, sealskin mitts, or homemade clothing items. Christmas is a bright star in the middle of a darkness that lasts months on end

Darkness breeds uncertainty and fear; a fear that starts early on in life. It's amazing how a 0.5-watt nightlight can chase away so many of the things that might scare you in the dark. Greenland experiences what is called the 'polar night.' How long that lasts depends on exactly where you are in the country, but it can last for several months; imagine going from 10/24-2/17 and never seeing the sunrise. That's a deep kind of darkness.

Isaiah (ch.9) talks about people who were in a deep darkness. Political oppression and spiritual wandering have left them confused, afraid, and desperate – suffering so many of the effects of being in darkness

Darkness is disorienting. *Maybe you've experienced this when you get up to go to the bathroom and end up in the kitchen. That could end poorly! Darkness can be disorienting when you are walking or driving, as well.*

Darkness is dangerous. *According to the National Safety Council (www.nsc.org), "It doesn't matter whether the road is familiar or not, driving at night is always more dangerous." Darkness compromises depth perception, color recognition, and peripheral vision, and everyone knows things get broken in the darkness – even in your own home! In the darkness, you may break lamps, RC cars, or even your toes! Additionally, you know, if you've got kids at home, that there's a LEGO brick out there somewhere, and yet, half-asleep and bleary-eyed, you stumble your way to the bathroom or to the kitchen sink for a glass of water. Knowing that there is a LEGO brick lurking, it might be considered safer to swim with sharks than to walk through your house in the dark. Dangers veiled in darkness are much harder to see and avoid*

Darkness is lonely. *"Jump scares" in movies almost always happen in the dark. It's easy to sneak up on someone in the dark – can't even see your hand in front of your face. It's easy to feel alone when you can't see anyone else there, and darkness creates a sense of separation, even when you're not by yourself. It blinds you to the presence of others – you don't even know they are there*

Each of those things is true of spiritual darkness as well. It's disorienting; it's dangerous; it's lonely. Spiritual darkness can exist in broad daylight. But consider Isaiah 9:2 (NIV) – ***"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."***

Walking – This is an active participle. A participle usually ends in -ing and is a verb that is used as a noun. Some examples are 'Breaking news' – 'break' is a verb, used as an adjective to describe the news, or 'Thinking man' – which is not a figment of your imagination! Active – they were not simply sitting around waiting for something to happen. They are living their lives . . . but in darkness. Greenland endures 4 months with no sunrise – but life is not simply "on hold." Imagine their reaction to that first glimpse of sun – there is hope!

"Have seen a great light" – perfect tense, which represents a past action that has present consequences. Jesus has come – no longer must you walk in the dark, searching for peace, groping about for hope.

"Living in the land of deep darkness" – another active participle. There are many, even today, who are living in a land of deep darkness, a land devoid of hope; barren of peace, doing the best that they can, but the darkness they are living in veils all kinds of dangers. These are not people who have no light; these are people who choose to live as if there were no light.

John 1:9-12 (ESV) – **“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”**

Light has come – Jesus is here! He brings hope, love, joy, peace to all who will receive Him. There are people around you who are living in deep darkness, stumbling their way through life . . . in need of the light. This Christmas season, YOU can shine the light of Jesus to those around you. Be a light-bringer to those who are actively living in darkness . . . this Christmas season

DIG IN!

Here are some fresh new questions that will allow you to personalize and apply this morning’s message.

1.
 1. **What are some of your favorite Christmas memories? What makes these so special?**
 2. **Why might someone choose to live in spiritual darkness rather than embracing the light of Jesus Christ?**
 3. **What is the funniest or strangest Christmas gift you’ve given or received?**
 4. **Read Matthew 4:13-16. What do these verses say about what we read in Isaiah 9:2?**
 5. **Read Isaiah 9:2, 2 Corinthians 4:6, John 8:12, and Ephesians 5:8. Taken together, what do these verses tell you?**
 6. **What foods might seem perfectly normal for you, but may seem odd to others? What did you learn about Greenland that makes you glad you have the food traditions that you do?**
 7. **What promises do you see in the following verses?**
 1. **John 1:5-7**
 2. **Psalm 27:1**
 3. **Isaiah 42:16**
 8. **How have you been keeping up with your Bible reading this week?**