



# Sermon on the Mount: An Invitation to New Creation

## Session 2 “Salt and Light”

In his book, *Missional Renaissance*, Reggie McNeal unpacks a word that’s been floating around church circles for several years now....missional.

What does it mean to be a missional follower of Jesus? For many of us, the word missional conjures up the idea of going on a mission. We might think of global mission trips, where we set out with a desire to serve those in need, yet found that we also had much to learn from those we encountered, inspired by their depth of faith and joy in the midst of extreme poverty. However, the word missional should not be confined to mission trips, service projects or certain activities.

McNeal reminds us that being missional is a way of life, in which we begin to notice where God is at work, and seek to join him in his work in the world. A missional follower of Jesus is simply one who sees their everyday life through a new lens, with the awareness that God is at work all around us --- in our neighborhoods, in our places of work, in coffee shops and grocery stores -- and he is inviting us to join him. He is inviting us to notice the people he’s placed in our path each day, to be aware of his presence with us as we go about our daily tasks, and to realize that all of our lives can be lived in partnership with him.

Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount provide us with helpful images for how we are to engage this mission as his representatives in the world:

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

(Matthew 5:13-16)

*It is impossible for missional Jesus followers to read these verses without a quickened heartbeat. These powerful metaphors show us what it means to be the people of God in the world. Salt penetrates, permeates, and preserves. All of these functions require its presence. It is not a neutral presence. Salt is an active ingredient that changes the flavor of things. The light metaphor illustrates the obvious truth that light shines in darkness. But it also adds the additional promise that when the people of God act like the people of God, we actually help people see God. In this teaching, Jesus raises the specter that when the people of God fail at their task, something significant is lost. The people of God lose their value, and people in the world fail to see God...*

*Church is not a part of life for the missional follower; it is a way of life with others who are on a similar journey.*

*The missional life shows up in every endeavor, because the church has been sent by God into the world to reflect his heart for the world. That is what it means to be on mission with God, partnering with God. It is not a mission that is pursued as something outside the normal range of activity, a quest to do something beyond your life's assignments. It is a way of seeing oneself as partnering with God in daily life, executing the mundane as well as pursuing the sublime, with an intentionality of blessing people and sharing the life of God with them.*

--Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 26, 33.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What stood out to you, encouraged you or challenged you from this past week's sermon?
2. As you engage with Reggie McNeal's description of the missional life, what words most resonate with you? Does this description give you a sense of freedom from obligation or "one more thing to do"? Why or why not?
3. What characteristics does salt possess that makes it a good image for how Christians are to live in the world? What do you think it looks like for a Christian to lose his/her saltiness?
4. While followers of Christ are called to live in a manner that is distinct from the surrounding culture, how does the second image of "light" challenge the tendency to withdraw from the culture or to condemn it?
5. When attempting to "let your light shine" why is it also important to remember the qualifying phrase, "that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven"?
6. Where do you see a need for "light" in our world? How does the image of light help clarify what it looks like to join God's mission in the world? Why is it important to remember that Jesus also calls himself the "light of the world" in John 8:12?
7. Where is an environment where you feel called to be salt and light to those around you? Or perhaps another way of phrasing a similar question: How might viewing your daily life through a missional lens change the way you are currently living? How could this group offer you support or encouragement as you seek to respond to this text?