

Goal 14:

LIFE BELOW WATER

Three quarters of the earth is covered by water. Most of this is seawater, while only 2.5 per cent is fresh water. The deepest parts of the sea are the least explored areas on the planet. What is hiding far down there? What forms of life have we not yet discovered? What we know for sure is that people have always harvested the resources of the oceans and lakes, but we have not been as good at taking care of these blue treasures.

In practice, the sea is used as a massive garbage dump. According to the UN Environment Programme, eight million tonnes of plastic end up in the sea each year.¹² This plastic has become a major threat to fish, birds and other animals living in or near the sea. Goal 14 states that countries must conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Reducing marine pollution, avoiding overfishing and protecting marine ecosystems are important measures for countries and for industry. This is an area where international cooperation is crucial. It also means that you and I must become more aware of how important it is to cherish life under water and to take action to preserve it.



Biblical reflection

“Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great [...] These all look to you to give them their food in due season” (Psalms 104:25-27). This is how the Bible describes life below water. First as a rich diversity with a multitude of life far beyond human knowledge and imagination. Then as an arena for God’s care. God is the giver of life in all parts of creation. For that reason, every being praises God’s name. Life is much more than human life; our lives are woven into a web much larger than what we ourselves oversee.

Our modern way of thinking tends to consider the unknown as less important. What we do not see, we need not care about. That may be the reason why we fill the seas with waste, in a way that threatens life below water. Or, we may consider the seas as being of interest only if they serve our interests, giving us the freedom to drain their resources, quickly and efficiently.

Faith in God the creator maintains that all life has value in itself, and that there is no sustainable exploitation without sustainable management. This also includes life under water.

Questions

- Psalm 104 encourages awe of life below water. What could be the reason why this topic has rarely received attention in Christian preaching?
- How can awe of life underwater come to expression in churches and in society?

Challenge

How can you change your consumption and your daily routines to reduce the amount of plastic waste that makes its way to the ocean?

Do you know of companies that you can challenge to reduce their contribution to plastic waste in the ocean?

Prayer

*Lord, you who know the depths of the sea,
Forgive us for our pollution and destruction.
Grant us wisdom and new chances
To let the fish swim and the waves break freely,
And to harvest the oceans wisely and with gratitude.*

*We commit everything and everyone, into your hands, Lord.
Amen.*