

THE VICAR WRITES

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“WHO ARE WE?” “WHAT IS OUR TRUE IDENTITY?” ARE WE MERELY SINGAPOREANS?

When the ship was threatening to break apart in the midst of the great storm, the sailors asked Jonah, “*What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?*” (Jonah 1:8b). And Jonah answered them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” (Jonah 1:9). What an unusual question by the sailors at a time of immense crisis, and what an unusual response by the prophet Jonah.

Some speculated the sailors had asked Jonah these questions because he seemed to be at great peace amidst the great storm. He was fast asleep at the bottom of the deck, while the rest were crying out to their gods to save their lives! “*What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?*” (Jonah 1:8b) are questions that the sailors had asked to determine Jonah’s true identity.

“*Who are you?*” I am sure we have been asked the same question many times in our lives. Our answer is likely to be, “I am a Singaporean” or we may describe ourselves by our ethnic group or by our vocation. But Jonah’s reply to the sailors was unusual—“*I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land*” (Jonah 1:9). Jonah identified himself first as a Jew, and in Ancient times, people would not have problem figuring out that he is a citizen of Israel. But to mention that he feared the

Lord, would immediately describe him as a *follower of Yahweh*—the God who created heaven and earth.

“Who are we?” “What is our true identity?” Are we merely Singaporeans? Perhaps we need to learn from Jonah to see ourselves beyond our earthly citizenship, but to consider our heavenly citizenship. We are sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, we are servants of the Most High God, and we are disciples and followers of Jesus Christ. That’s our true heavenly identity, and that’s who we are called to be when we put in our faith in Jesus Christ. If we acknowledge who we truly are, we need to realise that we have the responsibility to live-out our heavenly identity honestly, proudly, and securely.

We should never withhold our Christian identity, we need to be always ready to share our faith, and we should not be afraid of how we might be perceived by the world as disciples of Jesus Christ. As we are called to *return to our first love* in this season, this new intimacy with our Father requires us to live-out our heavenly identity on earth, and by itself, this will be the best way of witnessing for Jesus Christ.

“SO, WHO ARE YOU?”