

'Kill Them!'

by Jill Briscoe

Jill Briscoe's sermon highlights the courage of Festo and Archbishop Luwum in standing against tyranny and injustice during Amin's regime in Uganda.

Scripture: Psalm 94:16, Proverbs 31:8, Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 5:10, Hebrews 13:3

Topics: "Standing Against Injustice", "Persecution And Martyrdom"

Description

Jill Briscoe delivers a powerful sermon on standing up against injustice and oppression, drawing parallels between the courage of Festo in speaking out against the cruel killings under Amin's regime and the persecution faced by Archbishop Luwum. Despite the threats and dangers, Festo bravely followed in Jesus' steps, preaching against the misuse of power and the atrocities being committed. The story unfolds with intense moments of fear, torture, and ultimately, the tragic death of Archbishop Luwum, shedding light on the harsh realities faced by those who stand up for truth and justice.

Transcript

Over the next few months people from Amin's government came to the meetings where Festo spoke. Then it wasn't easy for Festo to speak out against the cruel killings. After all, Amin's people might get very angry and arrest him on the spot!

But Festo knew that Jesus had always spoken out about injustice. The Lord hadn't worried about His own safety, so Festo bravely followed in His steps. He preached against the bad things that were going on.

One day Festo reminded the people that all power comes from God. People who misuse that power will have to answer to God, he said. Everyone knew he was talking about President Amin.

"Some use their power to make themselves rich," Festo said. "And some get fat with it. Then they try to bully other people."

Everyone laughed, even a fat army man sitting in the audience. But Festo's friends were scared. They were afraid the soldiers would grab Festo any minute.¹⁴

But they didn't. Amin's soldiers had another church leader in mind, first.

"Amin is more nervous than ever," Mera told Festo a few days later. "It's all so unfair. No one is trying to overthrow him. We just want to stop the killings!"

As she spoke, gunfire broke out behind their home.

"Look, Festo!" gasped Mera. "Look at that man. He's just standing in the road, shooting wildly."

"Those poor women and children," exclaimed Festo, watching the terrified people flee. "They're crying and trying to get away from him!"

Hark flew to see what was happening. But something else caught his eye. A few blocks away, some policemen were pulling a man from a building.

"Please don't tie me up!" the man shouted. "I haven't done anything wrong."

But the soldiers took the man away. Hark read the sign on their truck. It said, "State Research Bureau."

What could that mean? Hark wondered, flying along behind the truck. He stopped to pull out his history book. He found the name in the index and quickly flipped to the page. What he read made him shudder. "The State Research Bureau is another name for Amin's secret police," he said. "What will they do to that poor man?"

Hark hurried to catch up with the truck as it roared away. When it arrived at a jail, Hark watched in horror as the police pulled several men from the back of the truck. He knew Amin's soldiers sometimes tortured their prisoners.

When the secret police want to get someone in trouble, they force their captives to say bad things about someone, Hark thought. Even the bravest people have trouble not giving in. The police torture them until they say what the officers want to hear, even if everyone knows it's a lie!

As he followed the prisoners to their cells, Hark overheard one of them whispering to the others. "I've heard about this place," he said. "We'll be lucky if we get out alive."

Suddenly they heard cries and moans coming from the other side of the jail. Hark hurried there to find out what was happening. He saw one of the police officers standing over a man who was tied to a chair. The poor man was covered with blood and bruises.

"Oh! They've beaten him until he's hardly breathing," sobbed Hark.

He heard the soldiers ask the man which Christians were hiding guns. The poor man was so badly hurt he could only mumble. "I . . . don't . . . know . . . anyone . . . with guns," he finally answered. Then his head dropped down to his chest.

"Tell us or we will hit you again!" the officer screamed. He raised a thick club above the man's head.

"Please! Don't hit me again! I'll . . . I'll . . . tell you. It's . . . it's . . . Archbishop Luwum! He's hiding the guns." Then the man started to cry.

Hark was stunned. Archbishop Luwum doesn't have any guns, he thought. That poor man tried to be brave. But the soldiers beat him until he said something he knew wasn't true.

Hark hurried off to the archbishop's house. He arrived in time to hear the dogs barking wildly. Men from the State Research Bureau were breaking down the fence.

"Look out!" shouted Hark (although no one could hear him). The police sprang across the lawn. Eight of them pushed the door wide open. They rushed inside, waving their rifles and shouting.

"We know you are hiding guns in the house. Where are they?"

"There are no guns in this house," Archbishop Luwum answered firmly. The policeman shouted again, "We know they are here. We'll find them ourselves."

"The archbishop's wife was asleep, but she woke up in a hurry," Hark noted. Hark jumped out of the way as the officers burst into the bedroom. They tore the place apart.

"Look under the bed," shouted one.

"Open the closet. Empty the shelves," ordered another.

"Here's a suitcase. Maybe the guns are inside," the first soldier said. He broke open the latch and tore off the lid.

"Look in the children's rooms," one suggested to his companion. "If I were trying to hide guns, I'd hide them there!"

So the soldiers ran into the children's bedroom. The older ones awoke with a great cry when the rough men burst into the room.

"Mother! Father! What's happening?" they asked fearfully. The archbishop put his arms around them and told them not to be afraid.

"What are they looking for?" asked one of the children.

"Guns," his father replied.

"Guns! There are no guns here!"

"I know, my son. But someone has told them there are!"

The soldiers looked at the youngest children, still lying asleep in their beds.

Oh, I hope they don't hurt the children, Hark thought, watching from the landing. The soldiers gazed at the small bodies, sweetly sleeping. They they turned on their heels and left the room. Hark breathed a huge sigh of relief. So did the archbishop!

"They are just looking for an excuse to arrest you," the archbishop's wife said under her breath.

After searching the house, the men left. They had found no guns.¹⁵

The Christian leaders in the city got together. They were upset about the raid on the archbishop's home. They decided to tell President Amin how badly his soldiers had acted.

Hark was very nervous as he waited outside Amin's office building with the church leaders. What will Amin say to them? Hark worried. What will he do?

The leaders had to wait outside in the hot African sun all morning and into the afternoon.

"They weren't even given any water," Hark wrote, really concerned. He knew humans needed to drink water, especially when they were in the hot sun. Many soldiers were sent outside to stand guard over them. Then the vice president of Uganda came out and made a speech.

"You have spied on the government," he began, shouting at the church leaders. "You don't think you have to obey our laws."

That's not true! Hark thought.

"You hid guns to use against us."

And that's not true, either! Hark thought, getting angry.

"What do you soldiers think we should do to them?" the vice president asked, turning to the guards.

"Kill them!" shouted the soldiers.

"Why," wrote Hark, "it's like when Pilate brought Jesus before the crowds and they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'"

"Let's vote. Who wants them to be shot?" said the vice president. Hark gasped as all the soldiers' hands shot up.

The angel was shaking with worry. And he wasn't the only one who was shaking. He heard the soldiers' thoughts. Many of them were scared, too. They didn't want to do such cruel things. But they were afraid of Amin like everyone else.

Hark was relieved that the church leaders were not shot on the spot. Instead, some of them were told to go home. But Festo, and Archbishop Luwum, and a few others had to stay. They were led into a room where a different official made another angry speech.

Then another man came and told them to leave. But as they were getting up to go, a soldier stopped the archbishop.

"The president wants to see you," the soldier said. Festo stepped forward hurriedly.

"I think one of us should go with the archbishop," Festo said.

"No!" said a soldier rudely, pushing him away.

Festo and a friend sat in their car for two hours. They were waiting for the archbishop to come out. The police guarding the place got angry with them.

"Go home! Now!" they shouted.

"Where is the archbishop?" Festo asked.

"He is still with President Amin."

"We won't go home without him!" Festo replied.

"He'll be home later," the soldier said.

"No! We are waiting for him here," replied Festo.

"I told you to leave!" said the soldier, pointing his gun at Festo. Get going!" he shouted.¹⁶

Festo and his friend drove to the archbishop's house and prayed. Hark stayed behind at the government building. He wanted to look for the archbishop. He searched and searched until he found Uganda's brave church leader.

Archbishop Luwum was dead.¹⁷

Hark was stunned. That good, brave man, he thought as he looked at the archbishop's bloody body. He did not deserve to die. But he is safe now with Jesus.

Then Hark shook with worry. Would Festo be next? he wondered.

It wasn't until the next morning that people in the city heard what had happened. The newspaper reported that the archbishop had died in a car wreck! But when his family tried to get his body for burial, the police refused. Everyone knew then he had been murdered and the government was hiding the facts.

A few days later, Hark carefully noted the date. It was February 20 in the human year 1977. More than 4,500 people came to the cathedral for a great service to remember their brave archbishop. Even though Amin had told the people they should not attend, the Christians came anyway. Hark thought this was very brave.

"Our brother has gone to be with Jesus. He is in heaven," said the pastor who led the great service. All the people sang their most loved hymn, "Glory, Glory to the Lamb." Their faces were full of light and joy.

Charity had come to the service with some students. As the funeral ended, she heard some people whispering.

"Maybe Festo will speak now," one said.

"Festo! Festo!" one called out. Others called out his name, too.

But Festo was not there.

"Where's Festo? Where's Festo?" the people chanted.

"Why, there's Charity, Festo's daughter. Let's ask her where he is!" cried a man.

People crowded around the young woman.

"Where's Festo, Charity? Why isn't he here? Is he all right? Did they arrest him?" The questions tumbled off their lips.

Charity looked at their worried faces. She was worried, too.

"I don't know," she told them. "I don't know where he is!"

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