

The Martyrs

by Jill Briscoe

The sermon tells the story of three young boys who were martyred for their faith in Jesus, and how their bravery inspired many others to become Christians.

Scripture: Matthew 10:22, Acts 7:54, Romans 8:18, 1 Peter 4:12, Revelation 2:10

Topics: "Martyrdom", "Persecution"

Description

Jill Briscoe shares the inspiring story of three young boys in Uganda who were martyred for their faith in Jesus, leading to the conversion of many others. Despite facing the threat of death, these boys remained steadfast in their love for Jesus, ultimately sacrificing their lives for Him. Their bravery and unwavering faith sparked a revival in Uganda, with many more people choosing to follow Christ, even in the face of persecution.

Transcript

Hark carefully checked the history book C.D. had sent along. He wanted to know how God's Word had come to Uganda. After all, Uganda was quite a way from the place where Jesus had lived on earth. How long did it take the message to reach Uganda after Jesus sent his disciples to tell the whole world? Hark wondered.

"Well, it says the first missionaries arrived from England in 1877," Hark said, reading aloud. "These were the two men who first told Kabaka Mutesa, the king of Uganda, about Jesus. He did not become a Christian, but he listened, too. And a few years later some of the people were baptized."

Then things got bad, the book said. "When King Mutesa died, his son Mwanga became king. He did not like the Christians. In 1885 he even had some people arrested for believing in Jesus," Hark read. "Three of them were young boys. They ranged in age from eleven to fifteen years old."5

Suddenly Hark gasped. The book said the three boys had been killed! "And it was for no other reason except that they loved Jesus."

Hark was stunned. "Now I see," he murmured, "why it can be very dangerous to believe in Jesus. Why, it might even cost you your life!"

Hark was curious. He wanted to know more about these brave young boys who died because they loved Jesus. He decided to go back in time to the year 1885. But first he made sure his heavenly pencil was

sharp and his camera was ready.

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"Come quickly, Mother! Yusufu has been arrested!" a teenage boy was shouting. "He and two of his friends have been taken away by some soldiers."

"Arrested!" the woman gasped. She reached toward her older son, Yusufu's brother. "What for? What have they done?"

"They are Christians, and the king is trying to stamp out the new faith," her son replied.

The mother rushed from her home to find her son. Hark flew along behind her. Soon they saw crowds of people running along a street. They were headed toward a huge heap of wood that was being set on fire.

"Oh no!" Hark shuddered. He suddenly realized the three boys were going to be burned to death in the flames.

"They are so young," he murmured to himself. "They must be terrified."

No one could see Hark as he moved easily through the people. At the front of the crowd, he was amazed to find the three young boys perfectly calm. They were even singing a song!

Now, remember that Hark was the Herald Angel and a member of the heavenly choir. So any song of praise sent him into a happy spin. But he had never heard a martyr's song before. (Martyrs, Hark knew, are people willing to die for their beliefs.)

Listening to the boys' lovely voices, Hark quickly wrote down the words. His favorite line was, "O that I had wings like the angels'. I would fly away and be with Jesus."⁶

Hark wished he could lend them his wings so they could escape the cruel flames.

One of the boys asked a friend to take a message to King Mwanga. "Tell him we aren't afraid of the fire," the boy said. "Soon we will be in heaven. Then we will be safe with Jesus."

Little Yusufu could see his poor mother and father at the edge of the crowd. "Yusufu! Reject Jesus," they shouted. "Then you won't burn in the fire."

His mother began to weep. A lot of other people were crying, too -- including Hark.

Even though he was only eleven years old, Yusufu knew he couldn't reject Jesus. Why, Jesus had did for him!

So the boys died bravely, singing their song.

And then, in the midst of the horror, something wonderful happened.

"I want to become a Christian, too!" cried a man who was watching the boys.

"And I!" came another voice. Hark couldn't believe his angel ears. More voices shouted out their love for Jesus. Forty people came to know Jesus that very day because of the brave way the boys had died.⁷

"The enemy didn't bargain for this," Hark said with a chuckle. He was thinking of how angry Satan must be. "It's as if he tried to put out the fire of faith with a big fan. But instead he has spread the sparks of joy all over the place!"

But the boys would not be the last to die for their faith.

"In the first years of Christianity in Uganda, hundreds of people were killed for believing in Jesus," Hark noted. He was reading again from the history book. "They did not try to save their lives. Like the three brave boys, they were willing to die for Christ."

With a great, sad sigh, Hark put his things into his backpack. Then he flew through time for several years. He arrived in Kampala, Uganda's capital city, in the human year 1972.

He landed right next to a lovely statue. It looked familiar.

"Oh," he said when he recognized it. The statue showed the three boy martyrs. "I'm glad they are honored by the people of Uganda today," Hark said.

Then he noticed a big church across the street. It was being decorated. "It looks like they're going to have a party," Hark said to himself.

He walked into the church. The people were talking happily as they hung flowers and banners for a special church service. Listening to them, Hark learned the name of the smiling man directing the work. He was Archbishop Janani Luwum. He must be the leader of the church, Hark decided.

Hark also learned that the church service was being held to honor another person as a church leader, too.

"I'm so excited that he's being made a bishop," one of the workers said to her friend. They were hanging a banner at the door of the church.

"Yes, he will make a wonderful bishop," the other woman replied. "If there's anyone devoted to serving the Lord, it's Festo Kivengere."

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