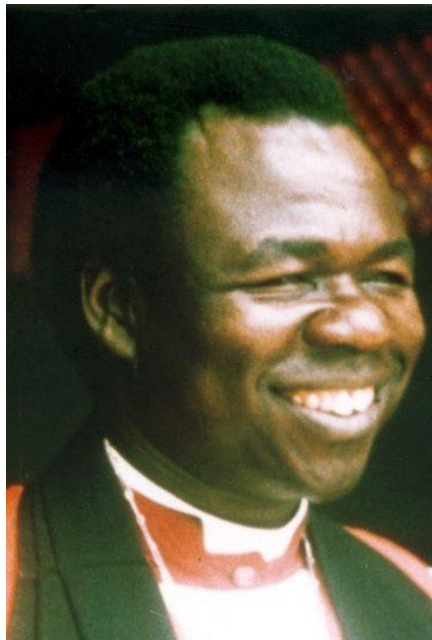


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CHESTER SQUARE

**A sermon to mark
the life and example of
Archbishop Janani Luwum
1922-1977**



**The Reverend Prebendary Charles Marnham
17 February 2011
St Paul's Cathedral, London**

Today we remember the life and example of Archbishop Janani Luwum, Archbishop of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Boga Zaire, a Christian martyr who died in February 1977.

Archbishop Luwum walked in the steps of earlier martyrs from his church. The first Bishop of Uganda, James Hannington, was martyred in 1885. This was followed in 1886 by a large group of men and boys, both Roman Catholic and Anglican, being burned to death because they gave their first loyalty to Christ, rather than to the Ugandan king.

Archbishop Luwum was converted to Christianity in 1948 while he was a teacher at a primary school. That same day he spoke publicly about what had happened to him: 'Today I have become a leader in Christ's army. I am prepared to die in the army for Jesus. As Jesus shed his blood for the people, if it is God's will, I will do the same'.

These words were prophetic.

Janani was ordained in 1956 and elected Archbishop of Uganda in 1974. He was above all an evangelist, passionate that others should discover the transforming power of the risen Christ. As both Bishop and Archbishop he frequently led evangelistic missions.

He was passionate, too, about the next generation of Christian leaders and he took time to mentor and develop their skills. Among those who benefitted from his leadership were the current Archbishop of Uganda, Henry Orombi, and the current Archbishop of York, John Sentamu.

Idi Amin deposed the then President of Uganda, Milton Obote, in 1971 and began a policy of repression which became a reign of terror. Over 50,000 Asians were expelled in 1972.

Showing considerable bravery, Luwum visited Amin to deliver personally a note of protest from the Ugandan bishops at the arbitrary killing and the disappearance of many of their countrymen.

Amin's response was to summon church leaders to the capital, Kampala, on 16 February 1977. They were then ordered to depart, one-by-one, leaving Luwum alone. Janani said to Bishop Festo Kivengere, as he left; 'They are going to kill me. I am not afraid.' He was never seen again.

Janani was told 'You, Luwum, are wanted in that room by the President.'

There was a rumour that Janani was asked to sign a confession, which he would not do, and that he was praying aloud for his captors when he died. It seems clear he was shot, although the official radio news announced that Janani, and two cabinet ministers, had died in a car accident.

You can see Luwum's statue today on the west front of Westminster Abbey, where the martyrs of the 20th Century are commemorated. Janani represents the martyrs of Africa.

We can only admire the Archbishop's courage and integrity as a leader. But we may ask ourselves why he was prepared to die for his faith in Jesus.

I believe that the answer to that question can be summed up in two words to be found in today's New Testament reading from Ephesians 3: 'love' and 'power'.

In our broken society, for many, love is hard to find. Human love is often conditional: 'I will love you as long as you are beautiful, or wealthy, or successful.'

God's love is totally different. God loved us while we were still his enemies. God saw the potential in us before anyone else did. Whatever your situation today, however uncertain the future – what is certain is this: God loved you enough to send his only son Jesus Christ to die in your place.

God's love is tough love. He does not say 'Carry on living as you have been living'. No! Rather he says 'Turn your back on all you know in your heart is wrong.'

God loves us as we are – but too much to let us stay that way.

God's love changes us and can help us love even our enemies – as we saw in the life of Janani Luwum, praying for his enemies as they killed him.

No wonder Paul prayed that the Ephesians might 'grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ' – for there is no other love in the world like it.

The second word found in Ephesians is 'power'. Paul concludes his prayer by speaking of God's power which is able to do more than we can ask or even imagine – power that is at work in every Christian.

Who wielded the real power when Janani Luwum faced the President of Uganda, Idi Amin? The real power was God's power, which could not be extinguished by a mere human tyrant.

After all its history of persecution and suffering for its faith in Christ, you might think that the church in Uganda would be disheartened and discouraged. The opposite is the case; today it flourishes – inspired by men like Archbishop Luwum.

You can tell a great deal about a person by the way they face death.

What the Archbishop demonstrated is real Christianity, not the sort of Christianity that is often portrayed in the media in this country or stereotyped in our increasingly secular culture.

If you are a visitor to the Cathedral, I hope you have enjoyed your time here, looking at the many fascinating objects – Nelson’s tomb and John Donne’s statue, to name just two.

You can also see a famous painting by the artist Holman Hunt called ‘The Light of the World’. It portrays Christ in royal robes holding a lantern and knocking gently on a door – an ivy-covered door which clearly hasn’t been opened for many years.

The artist was asked why there was no handle on the outside of the door. He explained that it was the door of someone’s life. Christ was patiently knocking, asking for entry but the door could only be opened from the inside.

Below the painting is a Bible verse from the book of Revelation. It reads: ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.’

This service invites us to consider the inspirational faith of Archbishop Janani Luwum. For some of us, already followers of Christ but facing difficult challenges, his example will encourage us to keep going and looking to the power of Christ at work within us. For others, it may prompt us to examine the state of our souls – our spiritual health.

Whatever you may hear from other sources – no one is beyond the reach of God’s love. All we have to do is open the door to Christ, as Janani Luwum did first in 1948.

You too today can join the Lord’s army of followers. You too today can be set free from the fear of death. You too today can begin a life that will encourage, perhaps even inspire, others as his did.

Amen.



*'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me' (Revelation 3:20).
'The Light of the World', by William Holman Hunt.*

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:14-21



The west front of Westminster Abbey with the statue of Janani Luum, on the right.