



A sermon for the Choral Evensong at Wells Cathedral, preached on Sunday 14 December 2025 by the Venerable Dr Chigor Chike, Archdeacon of Lewisham and Greenwich, Southwark Diocese and Chaplain to King Charles III.

Looking out for the other

Imagine you ran into someone from the past; you recognised them and they too remembered you. How good it feels to be remembered.

I had a feeling like that when, a couple of months ago, the Dean, Toby, reached out to me to invite me here. Toby and I attended a Church of England training programme together some years ago. But I don't think we have seen each other for the past five years. So when he contacted me, I thought to myself, how good it feels that he has remembered me.

Remembering is something important and occurs throughout the Bible. On many occasions, God - through Moses - told the people of Israel that they should remember the journey they had been on and that they should remember God. He even gave them particular ceremonies to help them remember.

One of them was the Passover festival. He told them to use that ceremony to remember when he saved their life in Egypt by passing over each of their houses as he struck down the Egyptians in their houses.

Similarly, Jesus talked about remembering with his disciples. When he was leaving them he said to them - when you meet together, break bread and drink wine and use that to remember me and our time together.

We also see something on remembering in one of our Bible readings today. In the New Testament reading, the Apostle Paul, speaking to the Jewish people of his time, took them through key points in their history, such as when they were in the wilderness, when they had Saul and David as their kings, and later when they had prophets. All that was to help them remember the journey up to that point.

In every society, what we find is that remembering, in addition to honouring the people we remember also helps us to draw lessons from our past, that we can apply to the present and use in planning for the future.

But it turns out that not everyone is remembered and not every group is equally remembered in society.

I think women and their contribution are not often remembered. Take for example, the people depicted in bank notes. The notes we use here, which are printed by the Bank of England, have had only three women out of eighteen individuals. If we think worldwide to the notes used around the world, less than ten percent of them have women on them. And out of over 700 people that have been depicted on notes worldwide, less than fifty are women. Again, three quarters of countries do not show a single woman on their bank notes. Women are just not remembered as much as men.

Something similar happens with people who are Black or Asian, and other minority ethnic people here in the UK. Let's do something: I want you to think of someone who was involved in the abolition of the slave trade. Now, the person you are thinking of is probably white, and a man.

In fact, the abolition of the slave trade was a mass-movement which many people, including Black people took part in. How many of you here know about a man called Olaudah Equiano? He was heavily involved in the abolition movement in the 1700s, yet little known today. Equiano was an African who was enslaved, first in the Caribbean and later here in the UK. And when he got his freedom, he dedicated his life to fighting for the abolition of the slave trade. This was no small affair. He travelled all over the country and in Ireland in the 1700s campaigning for abolition. He met members of Parliament including the Speaker of the House of Commons.

And Equiano was not the only African involved in abolition. There was another person called Ottobah Cugoana. Cugoana wrote a book arguing for abolition and he worked with Equiano. In fact, there was a wider group of people called Sons of Africa who worked actively for abolition. But they have not usually been remembered.

What gives me hope, however, is that alongside the tendency we have as a society to not remember the contribution of some groups due to racism or patriarchy, there has always been some people who go against the grain to see that the contribution of marginal groups are not forgotten. We know about Equiano, Cugoana and the Sons of Africa today because a small group of historians dug into the past to bring out their contributions.

We something similar with Jane Austen. This year is 250 years since her birth and activities are being organised to mark that. But it was people around her, I believe some of her own family members, who acted to ensure that her writings became public.

It gladdens my heart when I see such actions taken by people to ensure that others are remembered. And that is what we all have to keep doing, looking out for the other.

I am encouraged by the work of the Cathedral in this regard. I understand that in November you had on display a tapestry that showed the life and contribution of Black people here in Britain in the Second World War. I have also heard about your Living Liberty Project which is aimed at promoting racial justice. I want to encourage you to keep going.

We all have a contribution to make, both as individuals and as a church. I believe some day that racism will be a thing of the past. But it is us that will make it so. In the Isaiah reading, God was angry with those who only think about themselves. God wants us to be looking out for others. And I hope that is what we will do. That we will always be acting on behalf of others. Amen.

The Venerable Dr Chigor Chike, Archdeacon of Lewisham and Greenwich

14 December 2025