

Other than perhaps Nigel Farage, it would be difficult for me to imagine an Englishman I had less in common with than Jeremy Clarkson.

The differences are profound. One of us is a tall, curly haired, gargoyle-faced, outspoken, conservative, rich, TV presenting, laddish, heterosexual, Oxfordshire living, speed obsessed, friend of David Cameron: the other is me. For one of us torque is an essential function of an engine; for the other it's what a human does to pass the time at a bus stop. One of us wouldn't be seen dead in an orange Kia Picanto; the other spent 5 years happily driving one with only occasional embarrassment- such as being abused by a bus driver in Tottenham for taking too long to turn - 'What's wrong mate, don't you know how to drive your wife's car'. Better than you know how to drive your boyfriend's bus (is what I wish I'd responded).

Fenby chalk and Clarkson cheese, ne'er the twain shall meet (hopefully) but there is one similarity, one thing these opposites share, one point where the polar bear and the penguin coexist, perhaps not obvious, but there it is.

We are both, I think I can safely say both fascinated by cars, though different aspects of them and for completely different reasons.

For Mr Clarkson, it's all about road holding and acceleration; fuel injection and 0-60, big boys toys and gearsticks, a road hogging petrol guzzling pollution spewing end in itself. For me, cars are fascinating but because of the way we behave when we are put in them.

For many, many years, the behind the wheel behaviour of the motorist was the best way we had to see what humans are really like when they think they're anonymous, each driver behaving almost precisely as if getting into a car was donning a two ton invisibility cloak. Now, of course we've got Twitter to bring out our worst sides, but although it's a *lot* wider in its scope, the information superhighway is somehow never quite as vivid, all-age or indeed as life-threatening as getting in your car and driving into Croydon.

Whatever the Highway Code may have told you when you had to pass your driving test, the world of the road really runs on the understanding that the only person that really matters is you. Thus the unwritten rules read that you never give way unless you are forced to, and if you are forced to, the person you let in must acknowledge your graciousness with some hi-vis grovelling, at a bare minimum an

exaggeratedly grateful wave and a flashing of her hazards lights. Speed limits are only to be obeyed in the presence of a speed camera, a police car or possibly a Highway Maintenance vehicle (until you get close enough to work out what it is). Indicators are only to be used if you can be bothered, and then at the very last minute, otherwise it's a waste of your precious time, energy and resources to use them. An amber traffic light means hit the accelerator and of course when anyone climbs on a bicycle they are flagrantly disrespecting you and won't mind being harassed off the road because despite appearance it's almost impossible to injure someone who's wearing lycra. In fact a cyclist shouldn't really be on the road at all: they should ride on the pavement, except when I'm walking on it, in which case, get off: that's what the road's for!

That's just for starters. It's grim, grubby, imperfect, about as far from the Highway Code as the Daily Star from Shakespeare. It sort of works, but then it also causes a whole heap of stress, road rage, life changing, injury and death.

What can we do about it? Precious little indeed.

But even that little can be precious. Having now spent a significant percentage of my first year in Beddington waiting to turn on to or off the Croydon Road I am now endeavouring, when I am driving, to at least try to let other people out or in. I'm not trying to claim great moral superiority here, I can't even claim a great success rate—old habits die hard, and often it's impossible to slow down unless you want the tailgater behind you to become intimately acquainted with your car's rear end, but you know what, precious little is still precious.

Precious little is still precious. Christians should know this, Christians *do* know this, if they've been paying even the slightest attention to their New Testament, they know this.

That huge chunk of the scriptures that is St Paul's letters is forever telling us that even the smallest of us, the least member, has an important part to play; even more telling, those great epistles, bedrock of the faith, read and recited countless times over two millennia: they were written to be read to a handful of people. The Corinthian church, say, recipients of at least two letters from St Paul, almost certainly consisted of fewer people than come to St Marys. Maybe fewer. But those precious few were still precious to Paul. As a later century would say 'Each small candle lights a corner of the darkness.'

But there is more. 'You are the salt of the world', Jesus tells us. Salt of course, is an insubstantial part of the bulk of any recipe, yet its presence seasons the whole dish. You can't push that metaphor too far: too much salt spoils the dish, whereas too many Christians won't spoil the world, unless they're Baptists. Always too many of those. But a tiny part of bread is yeast, yet without that precious little, there would be no bread to speak of, just baked glue.

Not only can small changes make a difference, but Christians must make them, because Christianity is a religion of the small, a faith of the unimportant, the neglected, the overlooked and the inconsequential; the creed of the mustard seed, a micro-level small-scale small-time sect that can and does and will change the world.

Move away from parliaments and palaces, the habitats of the powerful. Turn your gaze from the great and the mighty, the princes of the state, church and industry and you will see more important things happening.

On the Croydon Road; at a bus stop in Beddington, in a front room in Carshalton or a shelter in Sutton; zooming out further and further till you have the whole earth in your sights; important works were being done in a million and one small acts of kindness and fellowship, acceptance and understanding God's love was proclaimed and the coming Kingdom announced.

There is precious little we can do. But how precious to God it is, when we do it.