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English-Shakespeare
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King Lear

King Lear, as many people do today, believes that a man's worth is measured by his possessions. It wasn't until the "storms" in Lear's life that he was led down the path of self discovery and gained compassion and empathy for life's misfortunate poor.

When King Lear retired and divided his estate with two of his three daughters, Regan and Goneril, he allowed himself one hundred of his servants, or followers, to tend to his needs. It was part of the agreement with his daughters that he live alternately with them and they would support him and the servants. The daughters, once they had what they wanted, which was everything from their father's estate, resented having to care for their father and his followers. If a person's worth was measured by what they possessed, then the daughters being corrupted by selfishness and greed was a measurement of the negative effects of wealth. The daughter's deceive Lear by persuading him to give up half of his followers each time he visits until he is alone. Finally, they punish their father by locking him outside the castle. King Lear, using wealth and possessions to control, disinherited his third daughter, Cordelia, as a form of punishment. Things meant power to King Lear, and he passed down that belief system to Regan and Goneril.

Occurrences of nature reflected human events in Shakespeare plays. During the first of several storms in King Lear, Lear's world is turned upside down. He believes he is going insane. He realizes he had been deceived and abandoned. He now has to discover what is real, who is true. If he was deceived by the value of things and flattering words and lived his life by a standard of appearances then how was he to accept another belief

system without questioning what was true? As Lear is struggling through this storm, he is made to interact with a homeless lunatic. He somehow connects and realizes this is man at his very core. The modern day saying "but for the grace of God, there go I" hits him like a bolt of lightning. He sees himself, his failures, his own selfishness, and discovers he is impoverished in another way, void of human understanding, empathy, and the true meaning of love which expresses itself by actions, not just words. For the first time he expresses concern for someone else when he is in the storm with the lunatic as he realizes the poor man is cold.

Life was the best teacher for Lear. He had to go through the pain of being destitute, abandoned, deceived, before he was able to build a bridge back to his third daughter, Cordelia. The king was certainly of no benefit to Cordelia. He had nothing to offer her but himself and all of his needs as an aging, retired, poor king. Yet, Cordelia stretched out her hand to strengthen him and reassure him that she discerned he was valuable just because he was her father, and a fellow human being.