

Once there was a woman who lived inside a vinegar bottle. One day a kind magician was passing by and heard her complaining, "It's a shame that I have to live like this, I ought to live in a cottage with a thatched roof and roses growing up the wall."

The magician took pity on her and granted her wish. She was very pleased but never thought to thank him. A year later as he was passing by he overheard her complaining "It's a shame that I have to live in a small isolated cottage like this, I ought to be living in a house among other houses with lace curtains on the windows and a fine brass knocker on the front door."

The magician took pity once more on her and granted her wish. She was delighted but never thought to say thanks to him. Another year passed by. Then one day as he went past her house in the village he heard her say "It's a shame that I have to live among such common small minded people. I ought to live in a fine mansion in the country with a huge garden and many servants to wait upon me and answer the door bell" Yet again the magician felt pity for her and granted her wish. She was very pleased but yet again never dreamed she should thank him. A few years went by and the magician decided this time to call to see how she was doing. She said "It's a shame that I am living all alone. I ought to be a duchess, driving my own coach and being waited upon like a queen." Yet once more the magician was moved by her and granted her request. And she was truly very pleased but never said thanks to him. Once again after a year the magician came to see her only again to hear her say "It's a shame that I'm a mere duchess and have to bow and courtesy to the queen...why can't I be queen myself and sit on a throne with a golden crown on my head". The magician granted her request. She was delighted to find herself queen but never thought to say thanks yet again. Years passed by and the magician said "I'll go and see the old lady and see how she is doing. Surely she must be fully content now. But on seeing her she said "It's a shame that I'm queen in a wretched little country like this. Why couldn't I be queen of a large great country? The magician thought for a moment and then told her that he would grant her request the very next morning. That night she went to bed full of proud thoughts. However when she woke up next morning she was back inside her vinegar bottle... in a sense she had never left it.

She reminds us all of God's people who no matter what God did for them refused to produce the fruits, not so much of gratitude but rather the fruits of good living.

"Lord you planted me on this earth, you fenced me around with the love of family and friends. Their care towered over me. In the shelter of this

tower I grew safely and in peace. I put out early blossoms I filled up with leaves.

People had great hopes for me. You had great hopes for me.

Now as harvest is approaching in my life

What fruit have I to show?

What if after all this care, I had nothing to offer but sour grapes?

May you lord have mercy upon me and with your patient urging help me to produce the fruits of love.. AMEN