

Fruit That Is Always In Season: Goodness Exodus 18:8-11 (Worked on this while in the Fl Keys)

Do you know what the largest fruit is? I'll give you a hint. It's orange and often ends up in pies. That's right. Pumpkin can grow to be the largest fruit. According to my research, the world's largest pumpkin weighed **2,819 lb 4 oz when it was presented by twin brothers Ian and Stuart Paton (both UK) at the 6th Wargrave Nursery Giant Vegetable Weigh-off in Wargrave, Berkshire, UK, on 6 October 2025.** The record was confirmed by the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth. **1.27 Tons of pumpkin, that is big.** I have to admit I don't usually think of pumpkin as a fruit.

So let's talk about the biggest fruit that grows on trees. That's jackfruit. The heaviest verified **jackfruit weighed 119 lb 16 oz and was grown on a family farm in Homestead, Florida, USA,** as confirmed on 22 August 2024 Guinness World Records. This record highlights the fruit's potential to reach extreme sizes beyond typical cultivation averages. That is heavier than many 4th and 5th graders hanging from a tree.

Jackfruits are compound fruits, composed of hundreds of small fruitlets fused around a central core. Each fruitlet contains fleshy bulbs that contribute to the overall bulk and weight. The exterior is covered in a thick, spiky rind, while the interior consists of sweet, fibrous flesh and numerous seeds, ranging from 100 to 500 per fruit

Why am I talking about large fruit? Because the fruit of the Spirit that we want to focus our attention on today is **goodness**. Of all the Spirit-fruit I'd say that goodness covers the most ground, like a giant pumpkin. **If you're good, then you're loving, you're patient, you're peaceful, etc. So we can just skip over this fruit right because we've already talked about being loving, patient, kind, etc.? We could skip goodness, but I want to take some time to consider God's goodness because this will empower us to keep producing goodness in our lives. Listen to our text from Exodus 18.**

Our text places us towards the beginning of the Exodus. The Israelites have already witnessed the Ten Plagues, and escaped Egypt by crossing the Red Sea and watching an entire army get wiped out in the resurging waters. They've seen water pour out of a rock after Moses struck it with his staff. They won their first battle when they fought the Amalekites. This all happened in the first three months upon leaving Egypt.

Moses had a lot to report to his father-in-law when Jethro made a visit. Jethro was not an Israelite. **He was a Midianite. These people were descended from Abraham's second wife Keturah. Jethro was a believer in the one true God and so he delighted to hear all the "good things" that the Lord had done for the Israelites. Jethro exclaimed: "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh... 11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods..."** (Exodus 18:10, 11).

Have your last three months been as eventful as the three-month period Moses told Jethro about? You may not have witnessed what the Israelites have witnessed, but he hasn't kept all harm from us. Many of you have faced life challenges over the past months and seen changes in your lives. But the Israelites weren't without challenges either. Our text says that Moses told Jethro about **"all the hardships they had met along the way" (Exodus 18:8).** But Moses was also happy to report that the Lord had seen them through those hardships. The Lord had been good to his people. **Moses' upbeat report reminds me of the psalm that says, "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. 6 As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. 7 They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion" (Psalm 84:5-7).**

The Valley of Baka doesn't seem to be a place as much as a state of mind. **The psalmist is saying that even though we travel through a valley of tears and may go from one crisis to the next, these hardships don't need to wear us down. For those who trust in the Lord will "go from strength to strength"** (Exodus 18:7). Just as God was with the Israelites throughout the Exodus and sustained them through their hardships, he's doing the same for you. You're only getting stronger through the hardships that you face, not weaker. **That's because God's goodness to you will never fail.** God lets us go through these hardships so that we can taste well his goodness.

I have to admit though that I'm not often like Moses who eagerly told others about God's goodness. At times I and I am sure you are annoyed at God that my life hasn't gone more smoothly.

But the fact that you and I made it through another week without any traffic accidents, is evidence of God's goodness, not our superior driving skills. T

The fact that we have a loving family to encourage and sustain us is also due to God's goodness.

The fact that he continues to be good to us in spite of our ungratefulness shows just how large God's goodness is, larger than the biggest pumpkin or the biggest jackfruit!

God's goodness to us has an eternal significance thanks to another kind of fruit that hung on a tree—a morbid tree. **When Jesus hung on the cross, it was the clearest evidence of God's goodness to us sinners.** Sin has scampered into every crevice of our lives and it ought to keep us awake at night as we think about the consequences we deserve for what we have done.

God ought to clear us out of his loving presence. Instead what he did was send his Son who came into our lives and gathered up all our sin and took it with him to the cross. **And there, in full view of the world, God punished Jesus for our sin. We're all safe now. Sin, the intruder, has been dealt with. Such is God's eternal goodness.**

And now this God calls us to display goodness. Have you been doing that? **If someone was speaking about you to his friends, would he be as excited as Moses was when telling Jethro all that God had done for them? Or would he speak about how calculating you are, or how you are overly pessimistic?** The thing is we have reason for cheerful optimism because God is good to us!

But being good is not just something that shows on the outside, it's also a quality that only God can see on the inside. Being good of course means that we will be kind and patient with others not just some of the time but consistently. Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote about that. **“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”** (Galatians 6:9, 10). Paul's admonition hits the conscience doesn't it, like an arrow shattering glass. I mean anyone can be good for a little bit just as a child can sit still for at least 30 seconds. It's continuing to be and to do good that's difficult. We quickly get tired when others don't appreciate what we're doing for them. And even if they do thank us for our efforts, we wonder why others are not helping us.

What can you do when you feel yourself become weary of doing good? **Run to your Savior for he has said: “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28). Take those feelings of frustration and lay them at his feet. Then marvel as he fills you with his Holy Spirit whose job it is to produce goodness in and through you. And don't forget how Paul says that in time you will reap a harvest.

Any job you do can become monotonous and difficult. But won't you be more apt to stick with the job if you know you're going to receive 2 million dollars at the end of it, instead of a measly \$200? Of course!

Through Jesus we have received a promised reward of grace that is worth more than 2 million dollars. You have an eternally pain-free life waiting for you in heaven. Don't give up being good, and don't get tired of doing good. You'll have all of eternity to rest. In the meanwhile make your goodness as obvious as giant pumpkin! Amen.