

Christmas 2020 Message – Luke 2:1-20 *(written by Dave Hammer)*

I have written a story for today's message. It's not a true story but I share it with you as it speaks to the theme of love in a very meaningful way for me and I hope for you as well. I think the children will enjoy it too and as Christmas is very much a time for children if you have some children I encourage you to share it with them.



Squeaky was the runt of the litter. He would always be a bit different than the rest of his brothers and sisters. Nobody ever seemed to have time for him. Maybe it was because he was so small and weak that nobody wanted to include him in their roughhousing in case he got hurt. Or maybe it was because he was too slow and couldn't keep up and the other mice didn't want to wait for him. Even his parents didn't seem to give him as much time as they did to the other mice. At least that's how Squeaky felt. Over time, Squeaky became more and more quiet and made less effort to fit in with the rest of his family. As the rest of the mice grew bigger and stronger, Squeaky remained small and weak. Eventually, Squeaky became a loner and spent most of his time foraging for food alone and only gathered with his family at nighttime when it was time to sleep.



When Squeaky and his littermates reached an older age and began heading out on their own, Squeaky met an attractive young lady mouse that he fell head over paws in love with. She seemed eager to spend time with him and Squeaky couldn't understand why she would want to be with him when there were so many other bigger and stronger mice she could be with. But Squeaky thrived on the attention she gave him and was thrilled when she agreed to start a family with him. At first it was wonderful, as Squeaky and his mate spent time together foraging for food and building a nice mouse nest to spend warm nights curled up together in.



Eventually, Squeaky became a father and the new parents took good care of their own litter of young mice. However, as time went on Squeaky became a distant and absent father and began heading out on his own to look for food and do his own thing. When he did come home, he was often short-tempered with his young family and even

with his own mate, whom he had once been so madly in love with. Now, with the added pressures of a family weighing on him and his mate not looking quite so attractive to him anymore, Squeaky left them all one day and never came back.



It was a cold evening when Squeaky found a small hole to make his nest in for the night. He had found it when foraging for food in the stable of a few animals, hoping that the animals had missed some of the grain that they had been munching on, but there was very little left over and Squeaky curled up in the small hole, hungry and cold. Shortly

after he had settled down into his nest of dry grass and straw, there was a commotion outside his hole as the animals shuffled around. Squeaky peeked out of his hole and could just make out some people moving around. There was a donkey with them that appeared exhausted and



it quickly sank down onto a pile of straw, gathering its legs underneath its dusty, brown body and laying its head down onto the ground. For a short time, all was quiet again, and then, suddenly, there was a flurry of activity outside his small hole and a loud wail woke Squeaky up from a troubled sleep. Startled, he scurried to the edge of his hole and poked his head out

cautiously, on the lookout for barn cats that would like to make a quick meal of a small mouse

like him. Sitting on a pile of straw was a young woman, holding a small bundle in her arms, with a strong-looking man kneeling protectively beside them. They were dressed in peasant clothes and appeared to have very little in possessions or food to eat, but there was a joy on their faces that made Squeaky warm and happy. Satisfied that all was well and that he was in no danger, Squeaky snuggled back up in his nest of dried grass and straw and soon fell into a deep sleep.



In the morning Squeaky woke up feeling better than he had for weeks, but hungry. As he poked his head out of his hole, he saw the man and woman from the night before sitting on the pile of straw, and the woman was holding what he could now see was a human baby. Timidly, Squeaky left the comfort and safety of his hole and then ran quickly across the hard-packed dirt of the stable until he reached the safety of the straw pile,

which he burrowed under so that he couldn't be seen. After a few minutes he cautiously

poked his small head out of the straw, with just the tip of his nose and small beady eyes exposed. He was sure nobody could see him but then he heard an exclamation of surprise from the woman and pulled his head back under the straw. However Squeaky was far too curious a mouse to stay hidden and soon poked his head back out again. And to his surprise there was a very small piece of cheese lying there, as though it had been put there just for him. Famished, Squeaky grabbed it and swallowed it in one gulp as he pulled his head back into the straw pile. But now he was wide awake and the taste of that small piece of cheese had made him even hungrier and he poked his entire head out, mouse ears and all. He could smell the cheese somewhere but couldn't see it. Then the calloused hand of the man placed an even bigger piece of cheese on the straw a short distance from him and Squeaky wiggled with excitement. On full alert for any lurking barn cat, Squeaky darted toward the cheese, snatched it up and scurried back toward his hole.



For the next two days, the young family stayed in the stable where Squeaky had made his home in the small hole in the stable wall, and every day the man would feed Squeaky with a piece of cheese or a bit of bread, or whatever else they were eating. Squeaky noticed that the family had very little food and he was surprised that they were willing to share it with him. After all he was just a small, insignificant mouse who was the runt of his litter and who had never felt like he was important enough to deserve much attention or love. But somehow, Squeaky felt that he was important to this family, and as he watched some shepherds who came to the stable for a visit exclaim over the little baby who Squeaky now knew was a boy, he too wondered about him. What was all the fuss about? Why, this little baby human wasn't able to do anything but drink his mother's milk and cry out at times with a loud wail. Yet, Squeaky could sense that this baby was loved greatly by his father and mother and even by the shepherds who had stopped by and other people who came to visit. Somehow, Squeaky felt like he was part of the family. Imagine that, a little mouse like him, one that had never felt like part of his own mouse family, now felt like he was loved by this tiny human family.



That strange but wonderful night and the next few days with that family in that small stable had a great effect on Squeaky. He began to wonder about his own family and the young female mouse he had fallen in love with. He wondered how they were doing without him. He felt guilty about leaving them. He wished he could go back to them and let them know he was sorry and would be a better father if they would give him another chance. Then, on the day that the young family left the stable for warmer and safer accommodations in the small village the stable was located in, the baby boy was lying on the pile of straw, all wrapped up in a



warm cloth, where his mother had placed him while she and the baby's father packed a few things into their bag and loaded it onto the donkey's back. Squeaky couldn't resist and scurried over to have a better look at this baby that all the fuss was being made over. He ran right up onto the baby's cloth that it was bundled up in, and peered right into the baby's face. Squeaky had never seen a baby's face so close-up

and was surprised at how beautiful it looked. Even the baby boy's eyes were open and Squeaky was sure the baby was looking directly at him, if that was possible. And Squeaky felt such love coming from them that he was overcome with feelings of peace, joy and even hope.

After the family had left the stable, it was that hope that drove Squeaky out of the safety and comfort of his hole and back towards his own family. Now that Squeaky knew what it was like to feel loved at this time in his short mouse life, after his own experience of feeling unloved as a young mouse, he was determined to do better with his own children and mate.

Throughout the season of Advent, we have been looking at how important it is to have peace, joy, hope, and love in our lives. Last week's message focused on how much we all need to be loved and to know that we are loved. It also suggested that when we don't experience the love we need from our own human relationships, there is the possibility of a loving relationship with the Divine or God. Those who go through life with the most joy, peace, hope and love are those who have received these things themselves from their family and other people but also from a Source that is behind or the creator of these things in the first place.

I chose to use a simple story as a sort of parable to help us realize that Christmas Eve and the birth of Jesus is one of the ways God chose to demonstrate love for the world and all living things. This tiny baby boy, who Christians call the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, was born into a very simple family in very humble surroundings. No grand mansion for him to grow

up in. No state of the art hospital with the best of doctors and nurses there at his birth. No wealthy family business that he would inherit one day as the eldest son. Just Jesus, Mary and Joseph were present. Oh, and a few animals, and maybe even a small mouse. The shepherds would come for a visit after the birth and the sages from the East would come much later, after Jesus was over a year old. How strange but wonderful it is that this very important baby would come into the world as one of the poorest and the most oppressed people of the world at this time in human history.



Wonderful, because the birth of Jesus in this way and in these surroundings, and with these parents, and with these witnesses, shows us that God loves us just as we are. It tells us that we are loved deeply and unconditionally with all of our strengths and weaknesses, our successes and our failures, our accomplishments and our mistakes, our love for others and our lack of love for ourselves and others. The Christmas story is about the love of God coming into the world so that the darkness might be overcome by the light.

If there is darkness living within us or if we are feeling unloved and unimportant, God is telling us that this is not true. We are loved. We are important. You are loved. You are important. Believe it! Trust in it! And may peace, joy, and hope be yours as love becomes a greater part of your life! **A Blessed Christmas to ALL.**

