



An open letter to my beautiful and precious granddaughter Scarlett in honor of her first birthday.

May 8, 2020

Dear Scarlett,

Happy Birthday Scarlett. This being your first birthday you are obviously not aware, but we are struggling through a worldwide pandemic. There is an invisible virus that has changed almost everything for most of us. The way we live, move about and who we can be with. Sometimes our world seems crazy and unreliable. But, you are too young to know that or to understand. I just want you to know that although I haven't been able to hug you for almost two months, it doesn't mean that I don't love you, because I do... oh so much! I am staying away from you because I love you! What a gift from God you are!

Scarlett, a cool thing happened to me the other day. I saw two Canadian Geese walking in front of me. As I approached and got closer I noticed something. I noticed a baby goose, we call them goslings, walking in-between the two adults who were obviously its parents. That new gosling, was trying to live in an uncertain world as its parents tried to protect it. That gosling's young life made me think of you and your young life. I am glad that you were born and that you have two great parents who love and take care of you even through a pandemic.

I have been thinking, Scarlett, about the world that you have been born into. I am sorry that some children do not have a secure home or life, but I am glad that you are surrounded by love.

And as I think further about our world, I am sorry that those of us who are older than you have not treated our world as kind as we should have. We have not respected our first calling to be stewards and caretakers of this earth and its natural resources, its diversity and its beauty as God required us to do. But I hope and pray that your generation will do better than my generation respecting and caring for God's creation as a key part of your attitudes and actions.

I am grateful that our great nation put aside wild lands as National Parks, these are national treasures and I hope that you get to see many of them. Yet, they may not look the same as you grow up as they have in the past. Climate change is taking a toll on them. About a year before you were born, a few of us, including your mom, visited Glacier National Park in Montana. We wanted to see the famous glaciers that the park was named after before they all melted away. You see Scarlett, not too many years ago there were over 100 majestic glaciers in the park. Now there are only a little over 20 left and even those few are much smaller. I'm afraid that you won't be able to see them. I'm sorry if you don't get that opportunity. Our world is warming up at exponential rates and it's affecting a lot of things: our human neighbors, our land, our oceans and our wildlife. Scarlett, the wildlife in our world is vital and helps hold our natural ecosystems together. Your grandpa has enjoyed seeing bison, bears and bald eagles. I hope and pray that you are one day able to do the

same. But, Scarlett, I am sad that during my lifetime, the worlds overall populations of wildlife has declined by over 50%. Imagine that, 50% decline in only 50 years. I am sorry.

Scarlett, it gives me joy that though this pandemic, so many people have found gardening to be a source of comfort and connection, connection to health and nature. Many are now gardening organically, protecting the water, air and the health of backyard wildlife around them. Yet, I am also sad that some of our backyard wildlife is struggling to survive. For instance, the Monarch butterflies that I saw and chased nearly every summer day when I was a kid are becoming a rare sight, in part because we are killing the milkweed plants which is their food source along their migration routes. We probably could do better. I hope and pray that you and your friends care about all species more than we have done these past few decades.

Your grandpa loves our oceans. You will probably visit the Pacific Ocean many times. You will love it too. But, Scarlett, there is an island in the Pacific Ocean that I want you to know about. It's very large, about twice the size of Texas. But it's not a real island made of land with soil and rocks. No, it's a floating island called the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and it's made of trash, mostly plastic. This island has been built in my lifetime. In fact, I have helped build it. I am sorry! I hope that you and your friends can figure out a way to avoid using something made of plastic for only a few moments before you throw it away. Because that's what we do now, we call it single use plastic. We use something for a brief moment and then we throw it away and you know what ... it lasts forever! Sometimes it ends up in that garbage patch island. I am sorry Scarlett!

Scarlett, God has given us a home here on earth, filled with beauty and natural resources. Your grandpa and his friends have enjoyed it and, yes, we have left some of it for you to enjoy too. But I think maybe we haven't left enough for you. The scientists say that during my lifetime, the world's biodiversity is down about 30% and humanity is outstripping the earth's resources by about 50% - essentially using the natural resources of one and a half earths every year. I am so sorry Scarlett that we took so much from you and your friends.

I could go on, but Scarlett you are young and I know that your attention span is not very long yet.

Scarlett, as I mentioned earlier, you have parents who love you so much... as well as a brother, cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents. The grandparent part includes me. I love you so much. And God loves you too, even through this pandemic. I pray for you and I pray for this world because God says it actually belongs to Him and not to us. I hope that you remember that. And I hope that both you and that baby gosling grow up to be big and strong.

I wish you a Happy Birthday and ask that God bless you Scarlett, that He bless your life and also that you may you live in harmony with all of God's creation, even that little gosling. Oh, I almost forgot ... I will hug you soon! I promise!

