

Funeral – Erlyne Jahn  
October 27, 2011  
Pastor Vern Christopherson

Carl, Jerry, Janelle, Jeff, family and friends, grace and peace to you from the One who lived for us, who died for us, and who now claims victory over every grave, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Luke 6 has some advice about how we should treat others. It reads: “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

I think Erlyne lived these words everyday of her life. She was a giver. She had a big heart. Her great passion was quite simple: to help people and to spread love. And what she gave to others during her 82 years of life had a way of coming back to her many times over... *a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.*

It all started when Erlyne was a child. She was born in rural Sherwood, North Dakota. Dr. McGovern was summoned to help with the delivery. Since Erlyne’s birth was not imminent, Dr. McGovern went out to the pasture and delivered a breech calf. Then he went into the house, presumably scrubbed up, and finally delivered Erlyne.

Hers were humble beginnings. But there was much for which to be grateful. Says Erlyne: “We were very fortunate to have been born into a family with so much love. We didn’t have a pot to pee in, but the love was always there. At night, Dad would take each of us younger children on his lap and sit down in the rocking chair and sing to us, mostly songs he made up.”

Erlyne goes on: “I well remember the Depression years in the 1930s. Since that time I’ve been a believer that no matter what happens in life, something good comes out of it. So, as the black dirt and thistles blew across the prairie, I thought that the nice fine dirt made smooth mud pies.” *A good measure, pressed down, shaken taken, running over.*

Erlyne was a giver. She had a big heart. On the farm they had a little calf with a broken leg. They took him into the house and put a cast on his leg. With a lot of tender

loving care, they nursed him back to health. One day that calf had grown into a full-sized bull. It was as gentle as the day is long. They would ride it out into the pasture to bring the cows home for milking. Erlyne comments: “Even animals know when someone has been good to them.” *For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.*

Erlyne attended school in Sherwood. She played trumpet in the high school band and sang in the glee club. She distinctly remembered Mrs. Schaefer, the English teacher, getting frustrated. One day she announced to the class: “I’m going to make you learn this grammar or you’re going to eat it.” In Erlyne’s case, the lessons must have stuck. After graduation, she attended business college in Minot. She learned shorthand, bookkeeping, and even more grammar.

Erlyne was a giver. She had a big heart. She was ready to share her talents with the world. She left North Dakota and found work in Rochester, Minnesota. It was 1950. In her words, “She went to work at the Mayo Clinic when it was just a hole in the wall.” She trained to be a medical secretary. She took shorthand notes for surgical seminars and later transcribed the notes into books. The doctors were greatly appreciative of her efforts and often requested her.

Erlyne was a giver. She had a big heart. One day her roommate, Marian Hodson, introduced her to a young man from the town of Spring Valley. His name was Carl Jahn. There was a slight problem, however: Carl was 100% German; Erlyne was 100% Norwegian. Despite their differences, they found they had something in common: they both liked dancing. I’m not sure if Carl swept her off her feet or what, but Erlyne was soon ready to give her heart to him. By June of 1952 they were married at a Lutheran church in Minot. *A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.*

Erlyne was a giver. She had a big heart. She was particularly helpful for Dr. Clagett, a world renowned thoracic surgeon. Erlyne regularly assisted Dr. Clagett, often with only a moment’s notice. The doctor was grateful. He told her, “Erlyne, if I can ever do something for you, please let me know.”

Sure enough, Erlyne’s father-in-law was in the hospital. He spent over three months at St. Mary’s and suffered upwards of ten heart attacks during that time. Some time later he was in the emergency room. He needed surgery. Erlyne talked to the intern who was on duty. She suggested they call Dr. Clagett. The intern’s eyes got very wide.

It was 6 o'clock at night. He insisted that Dr. Clagett would not come out at night to operate on anyone. It took some doing, but Erlyne eventually convinced him to call the doctor anyway—she would take full responsibility. Fifteen minutes later, here comes Dr. Clagett walking down the hallway. When he approached Erlyne, she started to cry. He said, “Erlyne, I’m so glad you called me, as now I can do something for you.”

As the doctor left, the intern said, “I don’t know what you’ve done for Dr. Clagett, but he certainly does hold you in high esteem.” Erlyne shrugged and replied, “It does pay to be nice to others as they will reciprocate to you.” *For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.*

Erlyne was a giver. She had a big heart. Soon she would be sharing her heart with children. Jerry came along, then Janelle, and finally Jeff. Erlyne was a stay-at-home mom for most of her children’s formative years. She liked nothing better than taking care of her family. She cooked roast beef for them on Sunday, tuna noodle casserole, and t-bone steaks on Saturday night. She sewed matching dresses for both Janelle and her. The family went on fun vacations to places like Disneyland and Washington, D.C.

When I asked the children what legacy their mother had left for them, they gave a variety of responses. Jerry said: “She taught me to reach into the future as far as you can.” Janelle said: “She was ‘huggy.’ She was full of love and hugs. She was a great mom.” Jeff said: She taught us that “It’s okay to get and give a hug. It’s okay to be a Norwegian as long as your last name is Hanson. It’s okay to enjoy your life.”

Erlyne was a giver. She had a big heart. She helped lots of people along the way. Her mission in life was to spread love. What she gave away had a way of coming back to her. *A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, was put into her lap; the measure she gave was the measure she got back.*

Are we going to miss Erlyne? Sure we are. Her loss leaves a big empty place inside. The family will be different without her. She hung on as long as she could. She was able to say her goodbyes. God was calling her home.

So now what? Will the measure Erlyne gave in this lifetime be the measure of what she receives in eternity? Not exactly. God has a different way of working things out. God loves us freely with an unconditional, grace-filled, no-strings-attached love.

God, you see, is the ultimate giver. God has a big heart. It's big enough to include all of us. It's big enough to include us even when we're not so deserving. Because of what God has done for us in Jesus, God makes room for everyone. When our time on earth is done, God is there with loving arms to welcome us home.

This reminds me of one last story from Erlyne. She writes: "When I was about 6 or 7-years-old I used to ride horseback and herd cows over on the old Jenkins farm. I kept the cows out of the grain fields. When the cows would lie down in the afternoon, I would get off my horse and play with my paper dolls. Then when the cows got up, I would get back on my horse and wait and wait for someone to get on top of the old barn and wave a big black coat to me that it was time to bring them home. Many times I would think they forgot all about me."

Here's the truth: no one ever forgot about Erlyne, not when she was 6 or 7, not when she was 60 or 70 or 80. What Erlyne gave in this lifetime had a way of coming back to her many times over.

God didn't forget about Erlyne either. As the years advanced and her health began to fail, God was there to support and encourage and love her. Erlyne waited and waited for some sort of sign. And then one day, it came. And God called her home. Amen.