

## Georg Israel Crosses the River

There was once a Christian blacksmith called Georg. He went far and wide preaching. He preached in Poland, Lithuania, Bohemia and Prussia.

Once he was going to a town called Poznań. It was early March and he needed to cross the River Vistula. At the place where he had to cross, the river was wide. At that time of year water came rushing down the river towards the town where Georg needed to cross. The bridge over the river held up the water. Then it all flooded over the town and into the houses. To stop this happening, the mayor ordered the bridge to be taken away. Now there was no bridge for Georg to cross the river! There was only one way. The river was still frozen. The water rushed along under the ice. "Could I ride my horse over it?" Georg asked himself.

He decided to test the ice. He would just walk out carefully. A little piece of land almost like an island separated two parts of the river just there. Georg got there in safety. "Can I get *right* across?" he asked himself. He looked hard at the ice. There were no cracks, just a few holes to keep away from. He stepped off onto the ice.

At first all was well. But under the ice was the flood water. All at once the ice broke up! Georg was left on a piece of ice being taken along on the river. He struggled to a piece of ice that was nearer the bank... then to another... and another...

As he worked his way from piece to piece of the ice some words came into his head. They were from Psalm 148. Round and round they went making him brave. "Praise the Lord... ye waters that be above the heavens..." He struggled onto another piece of ice. "Fire, and hail; snow.... stormy wind fulfilling his word..."

Now people on the bank had seen that a man was struggling on the ice in the river. A crowd formed on the bank, shouting to Georg to try to help him. The mayor of the city, was there too. Seeing Georg thinking hard to judge his jumps across from piece to piece of the ice, the mayor took charge. "Be quiet!" he shouted, "the man needs to think!" They all followed along the bank watching. Georg struggled nearer and nearer. He jumped from piece to piece of the moving ice. The words of the Psalm were still with Georg, making him brave: "Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth... Let them praise the name of the LORD..."

Now he was getting so near the bank the people could not stop shouting, "To us, to us!" they cried. They stretched out their arms; if only they could reach him! Georg jumped again and this time he landed on a piece of ice that bumped up against the bank. He was beside a little brick hut in someone's garden. He climbed out.

"God has saved him!" cried the watching crowd. "...His glory is above the earth and heaven!" said Georg.

Everyone in the town heard what had happened. Georg was able to preach to them and thank God in his sermon. He felt sure God had saved his life because he had work for him to do. For the rest of his life Georg continued to travel, preaching wherever he went. That was the work for which God had saved him from the river.