

“MYLANTA...Soothing relief for all your digestive needs...now available in chewables.” “NEXIUM...Healing is such a great feeling!” “How do you spell relief? R-O-L-A-I-D-S.” “ALKA SELZER...Plop, Plop, Fizz, Fizz; oh, what a relief it is.” Do any of those commercials sound familiar to you? All of them advertise a product guaranteed to provide relief from a common ailment called heartburn. That’s an ailment brought on by eating too much of certain foods which don’t agree with you. Ever had that kind of heartburn? This morning I’m not up here to offer you something for heartburn. This morning I’m up here to give all of you a good case of heartburn! No, I’m not going to serve you a spicy pizza loaded up with pepperoni, anchovies, and onions. And we aren’t going to replace the Sunday morning donuts with chips and salsa. The heartburn I want to share with you is right here in this beautiful portion of God’s Word. Here we meet two sad disciples of the Man from Galilee. They’re heading home after a long weekend in Jerusalem. Suddenly a mysterious stranger joins them and he gives them a good case of heartburn. That same stranger also wants to give it to you and me. So let’s walk along with them this morning. There on the road to Emmaus we will experience this wonderful thing called: “EASTER HEARTBURN!” 1) Hearts burning with joy; and 2) hearts on fire to share.

It’s Easter Sunday afternoon, but you sure couldn’t tell it from the gloomy conversation between these two broken-hearted disciples. They’re not singing “I know that my Redeemer lives”, at least not yet! On Good Friday they saw their dear Master die. They probably hung around the hill long enough to watch Joseph and Nicodemus take his lifeless body down from the cross, wrap it in a shroud, and bury it in a grave. Their whole life had now come unglued because their Jesus is dead and gone forever.

How wrong those Emmaus disciples turned out to be! We read: **AS THEY TALKED AND DISCUSSED THESE THINGS WITH EACH OTHER, JESUS HIMSELF CAME UP AND WALKED ALONG WITH THEM; BUT THEY WERE KEPT FROM RECOGNIZING HIM.** This was not some ghost on that road to Emmaus. The crucified, risen, and forever living Lord Jesus Christ will never be found in any cemetery. But he isn’t ready just yet to let his two followers find that out. First, he must do some teaching. This stranger interrupts their conversation: “*What are you talking about?*” he asks. That question stops them in their tracks. They’re shocked this stranger doesn’t seem to have a clue about what’s been going on in the neighborhood. Cleopas says to Jesus: **“ARE YOU THE ONLY ONE LIVING IN JERUSALEM WHO DOESN’T KNOW THE THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED THERE IN THESE DAYS?”** That sets off a tale of woe from their lips, an unburdening of their heavy hearts that reveals a feeble understanding of God’s whole plan of salvation. They tell this stranger how they had been followers of Jesus. They had believed his promises. They had seen his miracles and they were ready to follow him into the Kingdom of God he had talked about. But Jesus had died. His enemies had arrested him, beat him, and then crucified him. And Jesus didn’t lift a finger to stop it. Oh, they had heard reports that he wasn’t in his grave anymore and the grave was empty, but that didn’t mean anything to them. Like so many people today, these depressed disciples, without any faith or hope in a risen Lord Jesus, felt like their whole life was meaningless.

Jesus patiently listens to them. Then he has something to say: **“HOW FOOLISH YOU ARE, AND SLOW TO BELIEVE ALL THE PROPHETS HAVE SPOKEN. DID NOT CHRIST HAVE TO SUFFER THESE THINGS AND THEN ENTER HIS GLORY? AND BEGINNING WITH MOSES AND ALL THE PROPHETS, HE EXPLAINED TO THEM WHAT WAS SAID IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES CONCERNING HIMSELF.** These poor fellows only believed what they wanted to believe, and so had missed out on the best part of the Bible. That’s why Jesus conducted a Bible Class out there on the road to Emmaus. He opened up the whole Old Testament for them. He helped them to see why Christ had to suffer and die first and then rise from the dead. That was the only way these sinful men and you and I could ever hope to get to heaven. It sure would’ve

been nice to have had a tape recording of that Bible Class, because when the two disciples got to their driveway, they weren't down in the dumps anymore. When Jesus attempted to go on they said, **"PLEASE, STAY WITH US!"** I really believe they said that, not just because they were concerned about this stranger traveling at night, but because they themselves didn't want to go in and go on without him.

Now we read these awesome words: **WHEN HE WAS AT THE TABLE WITH THEM, HE TOOK BREAD, GAVE THANKS, BROKE IT, AND BEGAN TO GIVE IT TO THEM. THEN THEIR EYES WERE OPENED AND THEY RECOGNIZED HIM, AND HE DISAPPEARED FROM THEIR SIGHT.** A day that had started out so miserably becomes the happiest day of their lives. They see their dear Friend and their precious Savior, not dead at all, but gloriously alive. And they got a case of Easter heartburn! Listen to what they said to each other: **"WERE NOT OUR HEARTS BURNING WITHIN US WHILE HE TALKED WITH US ON THE ROAD AND OPENED THE SCRIPTURES TO US."** Never again would these disciples feel all alone. Never again would their lives be meaningless. Their hopelessness and their sorrow were gone. In their place was this indescribable joy from a Risen Savior who had warmed their hearts! Yes, they had Easter Heartburn alright!

Oh how our Jesus wants to give you and me the same. He is alive and lives forever. But this risen Savior knows how discouraging, how empty, yes, how hopeless life can be when we don't have this Easter heartburn. Our personal failures, our daily mistakes, our shameful sins load us up with an unbearable burden of guilt. We work and work and seem to get nowhere. We get sick, our kids have their share of problems, our dear ones die, and at times there seem to be more troubles than there are solutions. But dear friends, just as Jesus caught up with these two disciples on the road and walked the rest of the way with them, He lives to catch up with each of us to walk the rest of the way with us down that not-so-easy road called life. He lives to talk to us whenever we open up his Word. Yet how often might Jesus have to say to us? **"HOW FOOLISH YOU ARE AND HOW SLOW OF HEART TO BELIEVE ALL THAT THE PROPHETS HAVE SPOKEN...**How foolish you are not to open up your Bibles more than you do...how foolish when the message of my perfect life, my saving death, and triumphant resurrection will always cheer you up and comfort you even in the worst of days...how foolish to let your Bibles collect dust when a daily diet of my Word in family devotions during the week and family worship on Sunday mornings will always bring my peace, my strength, and my guidance to your lives!"

The cross is empty. So is the tomb. We really are forgiven of any and every sin! He really is our Savior! That will never change! All of his promises in here are unbreakable and unshakeable. That's because he lives as the almighty Son of God to keep every last one of them. Because he lives, we don't ever face any problem, any hurt, or any care alone. Wherever we go, whatever we are doing, however hard the circumstances and pressures might be, like those Emmaus disciples we can say to Jesus **"PLEASE STAY WITH US"**, and he will. When we are facing tough times or great trials, he'll always be right beside us to see us through – even through death and the grave. That just has to give us Easter heartburn!

But there's something else those two Emmaus disciples did on the first Easter Sunday. Not only did their hearts burn with joy over a risen Savior, their hearts were also on fire to share him with others. They didn't sit around that supper table very long, did they? After seeing their Lord alive, they got up and walked those 7 miles all the way miles back again to Jerusalem in the dark. Maybe they ran! What a happy hike it was this time! Our text says: **THEY FOUND THE ELEVEN AND THOSE WITH THEM ASSEMBLED TOGETHER AND SAYING: "IT IS TRUE! THE LORD HAS RISEN AND HAS APPEARED TO SIMON. THEN THE TWO TOLD WHAT HAD HAPPENED ON THE WAY, AND HOW JESUS WAS RECOGNIZED BY THEM WHEN HE BROKE THE BREAD."** At the end of that very first Easter there wasn't a gloomy person in the room. They encouraged each other with the good news of a crucified and risen Savior. After that day for the rest of their lives they kept passing Easter heartburn on to thousands of other sinners just like

themselves.

If our crucified and risen Savior means anything to us, we're going to pass him on too, aren't we? There once was a poor old scrubwoman wonderfully converted to Christianity late in life. She wasn't about to let any opportunity go by to tell others the message of Easter. One day, a friend who hadn't experienced Easter heartburn the way she did, hassled this aged lady: "Aren't you carrying your Christian religion a little too far? Yesterday I saw you talking to a wooden Indian in front of the drugstore and telling it, "He is risen!" The old woman replied, "Maybe so, maybe so. My eyesight is poor and I take no chances, but talking to a wooden Indian about my risen Savior isn't half as bad as being a wooden Indian who never talks about him at all!" Please don't go around talking to wooden Indians, but please don't be a wooden Indian, either! There are people all around you, near to you maybe even dear to you who desperately need to have this Easter heartburn, too. Tell them about the old rugged Cross and the empty tomb in Jerusalem's cemetery! Tell them that Jesus is their risen Savior who will carry them through all of life and will carry them through death to eternal life. Believe me, there just isn't anything in this whole world you could tell a fellow sinner more precious than that!

So how do you spell relief? Relief from sin, sorrow, the death's scariness, and whatever else troubles you? How do you spell relief? Why, we don't spell it at all. We sing it! Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives. I know that my Redeemer lives. That's Easter heartburn. Treasure it forever and share it whenever you can! Amen.