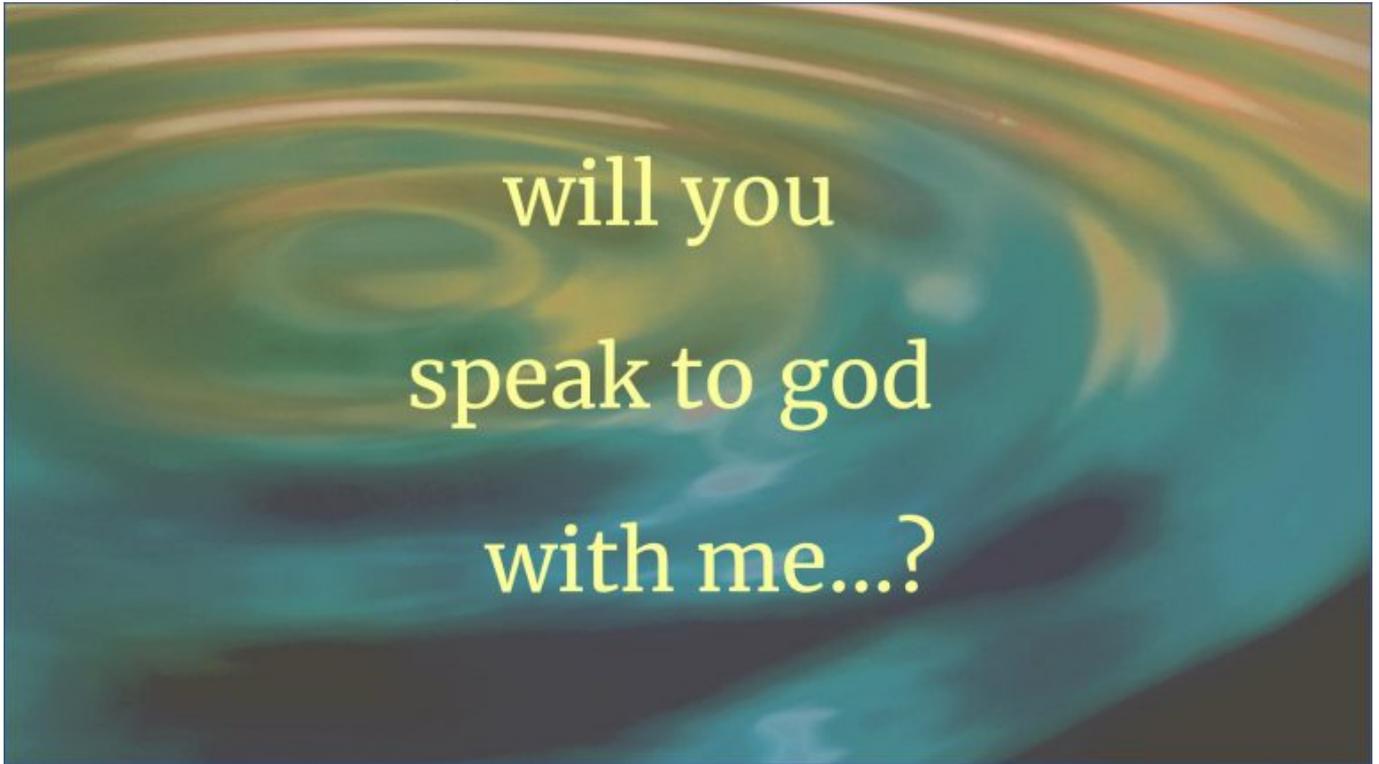


Something Stronger

Category: Poems

written by Matt Hagerman | July 9, 2021



you said he likes it dark in the morning. every morning
he made black coffee by the light through the window over the sink
well anyway he used to. well anyway that's why it's so dark in here beg your
pardon
the monitor beeped and i ate my yawn and said no problem almost my lunchtime
anyway
you laughed and i laughed but he did not see the joke
i'd seen his mri i wondered if he could see anything at all out of that eye
seventy-four-year-old male temporal mass first start case
you sipped coffee from a styrofoam cup. you said he liked to garden
likes to garden

you got quiet for a while then
i said politely the thing you're supposed to can i get you anything do you
need anything
you wanted something stronger than this junk
well we both smiled and i said of course i'll see what i can do
but i didn't see in fact i forgot pretty quick

because it was find the suite scrub in circles clean the fingernails gown up
gloves on
do you know when we wheeled him back in that white gown he smiled at me like
he knew me
we were old friends and i smiled back before i shoved a tube in him gassed up
his lungs
do you know while you drank that cheap coffee i

grinded a hole in his head let a little sunshine into his skull black bits of
him tumbling down to my sneakers
someone etched at him chipped away dug a plot while i irrigated veins
spreading like roots
(more water more water come on)
do you ever wonder how we did it like really wonder
was it graceful and did we pray and was there an angel flapping her wings
over us
(more water more water don't stop)
we tossed that yellow skull flap on the table and i kept watering him
can you believe it they scooped him out with a tiny spoon like they use to
let you try ice cream
do you want one scoop or two?
that's about the time i realized shit i forgot your coffee

later when we stitched back his scalp and washed his hair
understand you have to wash the blood out of the hair
you asked me how it went
i said well i don't know much but i think it was fine
i left the coffee cup steaming and you thanked me. you asked me
was he afraid
you were already crying even when i said no not at all he did not see fear
you grabbed my hand and you touched his hands and you said
his fingernails have never been so clean
you know he always makes the coffee he weeds the garden now can you believe
it it's overgrown with nightshade

you said please will you pray with me
will you speak to god with me
well i don't know how to speak to god so
i just held your hand and hoped we hadn't taken the piece of him that
always made the coffee and took the nightshade from the garden